Storytelling

An Encyclopedia of Mythology and Folklore

Edited by Josepha Sherman

Storytelling

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Volume One

Volume Two

Volume Three

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80 Business Park Drive
Armonk, NY 10504

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Storytelling: an encyclopedia of mythology and folklore/Josepha Sherman, editor.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-7656-8047-1 (hardcover: alk. paper)
1. Folklore—Encyclopedias. 2. Mythology—Encyclopedias. 3. Storytelling—Encyclopedias.
I. Sherman, Josepha.

GR35.S76 2008
398.203—dc22 2008007915

Cover image: Werner Forman/Art Resource, New York.

Printed and bound in the United States of America

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of
American National Standard for Information Sciences
Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials,
ANSI Z 39.48.1984.

(c) 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Publisher: Myron E. Sharpe
Vice President and Editorial Director: Patricia Kolb
Vice President and Production Director: Carmen Chetti
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Program Coordinator: Cathleen Prisco
Text Design: Carmen Chetti and Jesse Sanchez
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Preface

The world of storytelling is a vast one. It covers the entire world and everything in it, and every century in which there is a record of storytelling having taken place. In the early days of putting this encyclopedia together, it was soon apparent that the central dilemma was not so much what to include, but what to exclude. After all, almost every subject can be used by an enterprising storyteller, and, if every potential subject was to be included, this would have turned into an endless series of volumes.

It seemed important to include examples of world tale types, from which storytellers could spin off their own versions, basic world myths, and folktales. Also included have been some of the major characters in mythology, folklore, and popular culture, and discussions of how they are related to one another. Another inclusion has been short biographies of major figures in the realm of storytelling, such as Hans Christian Andersen and J.R.R. Tolkien.

Where data was available—wars, other major events, and cultural changes invariably got in the way—basic national storytelling styles have been included. Also included in this work are subjects more peripherally related to storytelling, such as role playing games and the connections of superheroes to folktales.

The general format of this encyclopedia is a collection of informative entries, organized in alphabetical order. This section is followed by a carefully chosen selection of appropriate retellings of many of the stories discussed in the entries. Appendices include a list of educational programs and courses focused on storytelling and a list of storytelling festivals. A selected bibliography and a comprehensive index are also provided for more in-depth research.

Taken as a whole, you will find this three-volume reference set to be a most definitive and fascinating study of the wide world of storytelling.

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Introduction

Once Upon a Time . . .

. . . there was a story. Story openings take a number of forms: "once there was," "once there was not," "once, in the long ago days," and many others. But no matter what shape the opening words take, the result is always the same—listeners are hooked.

Once a story has begun, there is something deep within the human psyche that must hear what will happen next. The pull of the story is universal. There is no known culture without some form of storytelling, and the craving to know "what comes next" has been felt by every human being, regardless of age, gender, culture, or century.

Storytelling is present in many aspects of human life. Stories are told by grandparents, parents, and other family members. Professional storytellers share their tales at fairs, festivals, schools, libraries, and other sites. Stories are integral to the mediums of television, film, opera, and theater, and storytelling sessions sometimes take place in the business world at special meetings. Campfire tales are meant to make campers shiver. And urban legends, contemporary folktales that usually are attributed to a "friend of a friend," are told and retold. No matter how unlikely the tale may be, the teller invariably insists, "It's *true!*"

Storytelling Throughout History

Storytelling is one of the oldest human activities, possibly as old as language itself. So who was the first to tell a tale? It may have been a hunter boasting of his skill or exaggerating the reason for his failure to find game. It may have been a mother who told stories of monsters waiting in the forest to keep her children from wandering off. Or it might have been a shaman, seeking to explain the creation of the world, the turning seasons, or the coming of birth or death.

There is no way to determine the first individual ever to tell a story. The history of storytelling can be traced back only as far as the development of written language. The oldest surviving written records show that storytelling was thriving by the second millennium B.C.E. Records of Egyptian storytelling date to about 2560 B.C.E., when the sons of Pharaoh Khufu (or Cheops) entertained their father with stories.

The first written stories are from the first millennium B.C.E. Early examples show that the basic elements for a good story were already in place by that time. The Egyptian tale "The Prince and His Three Fates," which dates to about 1500 B.C.E., includes familiar themes, such as the princess in the tower or, in some versions, on the glass mountain, who can be rescued only by a true hero. And this story certainly is older than the written version.

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In general, by the time a story is written down, it has been told and retold, possibly for centuries. One of the earliest known storytellers is the Greek poet Homer, who lived in the eighth century B.C.E. Homer probably recited his *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in front of an audience long before these epics were written down. Another storyteller from ancient Greece whose tales were later recorded, the fabulist Aesop, lived in the fifth century B.C.E.

A similar example of a traditional tale that was handed down is the Near Eastern epic of Gilgamesh. The earliest complete version dates to the seventh century B.C.E., but there are earlier, incomplete versions from about 1500 B.C.E.

There are written stories from Greece, China, and India that date to the end of the first millennium B.C.E. In the British Isles at that time, Celtic storytellers wandered the countryside telling stories of gods, heroes, and clan histories. The earliest Welsh storyteller for whom a name was recorded was Taliesin, who lived in the sixth century C.E.

In the Middle Ages, storytellers' names were regularly recorded, and, by the time of the Renaissance, individual storytellers were identified around the world. In China, the first storyteller whose life was well documented was Liu Jingting, who lived in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries C.E.

Throughout these early years, much storytelling—unrecorded but very real—was taking place. Mothers, fathers, and grandparents were telling stories to their families, wandering or amateur storytellers were telling stories to villagers, and people in general were telling stories on the job, on breaks, and whenever there was time—as they continue to do today.

Why Tell Stories?

The real question may be how can one *not* tell stories? Every conversation is rife with information-packed stories of what the teller has been doing recently. People share stories they have heard from others, retell stories they have read, and even rehash things they have seen on television. Anyone who chooses to formalize this sharing takes on the role of the "storyteller."

A storyteller has a repertoire of tales, skill at delivering those tales, and access to an audience. The sharing of stories serves the audience as well as the teller. For the audience, the storytelling event offers a moment of play, a shared experience, a bonding.

Participation stories allow listeners to be involved in an artistic event—and, in the hands of a skilled teller, they can play their part very well. Emotionally intense stories bring a group of people closer together in a shared caring. In such a group event, emotions that are not normally allowed to surface are released.

The most wonderful gift of story is the bonding of a group. Held close under the spell of a story, the group breathes as one. The shared experience softens the edges between individuals and brings everyone closer in the warmth of the moment. Together, the members of the group enter a "story trance." Storytellers benefit, in turn, as they experience the heartwarming feeling of holding the audience's attention and nurturing the group by sharing a beloved tale.

Many stories also serve the community in a broader sense. All societies use stories to pass on group values. Wrapped in the sweet pill of an entertaining story, a moral goes down easily. Stories also can be useful tools that allow individuals to chastise or expose negative behaviors without overtly speaking the truth. The Liberian storyteller Won-Ldy Paye related how Anansi spider stories have been used to "say without saying" in front of a chief. If the chief has behaved in a greedy manner, the storyteller shows Anansi in this incorrect behavior. Everyone knows whom the storyteller is talking about. The chief hears, and he knows, too.

Many families draw "catch-phrases" from their favorite stories, with which they can quickly refer to a story in the course of their daily lives. A phrase, such as "It don't take long to look at a horseshoe," can bring family members back to the original story, as well as remind them of the moral of the tale.

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Communities and families also may wrap their history in stories in order to remember details of events long past. A moment in time can be preserved by creating a story and telling it a few times. The story format bundles the facts into a neatly tied packet that is more readily stored and retrieved than a number of separate details.

Stories also help to broaden awareness of other cultures. The folktale genre, in particular, reflects many traditions and helps to familiarize people with world cultures.

Stories also can be used for educational purposes. Stories can help to develop a child's literary sensibilities, and listening to tales impresses a sense of story structure into a child's mind. Stories aid in stretching vocabulary, and children who are able to tell stories often gain advanced verbal ability and an increased sense of self-worth.

Storytelling provides other growth opportunities, as stories help listeners to see through another's eyes and to share the protagonist's feelings of anger, fear, or love—all from a safe place. The Austrian-born American writer and child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim explained that stories are important to children because battling difficulties through story can help them face real-life troubles. Stories provide role models who show us how to face demons and overcome adversity.

Perhaps best of all, stories stretch the imagination. The teller takes the listener to distant places where remarkable things happen. And once stretched, an imagination stays stretched.

What Is a Story?

There are many different story categories, ranging from true adventures to tall tales. All stories can be organized roughly into four genres: true stories, folklore, fiction and literature, and fairy tales.

True Stories

A true story may be a personal account or a recounting of a historic event. The story may be embellished or exaggerated, but the facts generally are unaltered. News stories fall into this category, and newscasters, with their deliberate style of delivery, definitely can be called storytellers.

There are also folk performers, such as the *plena* singers of Puerto Rico, who present the news of the day and social commentary in music. Like the traditional town crier, who strolled the streets calling out the day's news, these storytellers provide information in communities that lack ready access to television or recent newspapers.

Family stories usually are shared among the members of a nuclear or extended family. These tales may include factual history, shared memories, family jokes, and exaggerated tales about the exploits or mishaps of family members and friends. In the past, family histories were fabricated to trace back the ancestry of a ruler, or a particular clan, to a deity. This gave early leaders and dominant peoples credibility among the masses.

The types of family stories range from personal memories to general family histories that include a family's shared beliefs, customs, and folklore. Stories of personal memories tend to be less complex than family histories. Personal memories might include seemingly trivial events, such as how a sister had a "bad hair day" on the day of a big date and what she did about it, or how the teller first planted a garden. In the right hands, however, this same material can be crafted into an engaging tale.

Family stories or histories generally encompass a larger view of the world. They might tell of how the family survived the Great Depression in the United States, how ancestors migrated from their homeland, or even explain the origin of family holiday traditions.

Related to family stories are fictionalized accounts that sound plausible and can be told outside the family. An example is James Thurber's hilarious "The Night the Bed Fell," which he included in a book of such tales, *My Life and Hard Times* (1933).

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Folklore

The genre of folklore predates written literature and can be broken down into the following categories: folktales, nursery rhymes and some nonsense rhymes, myths, religious stories, epics, ballads, fables, and legends.

A folktale is literally a tale of the folk, or the people, that has no known author. Folklorists separate folktales into basic categories, such as wonder tales, moral tales, tales of fools, and *pourquoi,* or how-and-why, tales.

A wonder tale generally is a story of adventure and magic with familiar themes, such as the triumph of the third son, the magic sword, the talking animal helper, and so on. An example of a moral tale is the "Grateful Dead" tale type, in which a ghost rewards the man who gave his earthly remains an honorable burial. Fool tales, also known as noodle or numbskull tales, generally are good-natured tales of foolish or downright stupid people, such as the Jewish folktales of the people of Chelm, "to whom foolish things keep happening." Pourquoi tales explain the how-and-why of things that are too ordinary to be the themes of true myths, such as the West African story of "Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears" or the Indian story of "Why the Blue Jay is Blue."

Nursery rhymes are ideal for entertaining young children. There are many collections of nursery rhymes available, and the rhymes usually are in the public domain. Some storytellers invent their own rhymes. But the classic rhymes have been around for ages for good reason: They are fun for children to repeat and effectively use humor and musical language. Nonsense rhymes are also favorites with the younger age group.

Myths address daunting themes such as creation, life, death, and the workings of the natural world, answering major life questions such as "How did the world begin?" and "Why does the Sun rise and set?" Myths often include deities and other supernatural beings in their lists of characters, and they may tell of cosmic events, such as the birth of the universe.

Myths are closely related to religious stories, since myths sometimes belong to living religions. In addition to explaining questions about the world around us, these stories create a sense of community among believers, often giving comfort to the listeners. Religious stories are likely to be retellings from sacred books, such as the Judeo-Christian Bible and the Hindu *Bhagavad Gita*. Religious stories also may take the form of parables, or tales intended to teach a lesson, such as the Christian parable of the prodigal son.

Epics are long narrative poems about the adventures of legendary figures. While Homer's *Iliad* may not sustain the interest of a youthful audience, the tales of King Arthur and his knights or the adventures of the African hero-king Sundiata would be appropriate. Shorter epic tales that are full of adventure and heroism are ideal for children.

Ballads are poems that tell a dramatic story in verse. Longer ballads may be too much for a younger audience, but a great many of the ballads—for instance, those about Robin Hood—can easily be told as stories.

Fables are short stories that teach a lesson. Many of the characters in fables are animals that talk and act like humans. Some fables, such as those written by the eighteenth-century French writer Voltaire, were meant for adults. Others, such as Aesop's fables, are more popular with children, because of the clear examples of right and wrong. In Aesop's "The Fox and the Grapes," the fox is unable to reach the grapes and so decides they are sour. The moral of this fable is, "It is easy to despise what you cannot get."

Legends are about historic or quasi-historic people or places. American legends, to take some familiar examples, include stories about larger-than-life but real people, such as frontiersman Davy Crockett (who invented many of his legends himself) and riverboat man Mike Fink. A legend may feature a real person but not celebrate an actual event. The American legend of George Washington and the cherry tree is based on an incident that never occurred. The legend has lasted, because peo-

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ple wanted to believe that Washington was honorable even as a boy. Quasi-historic figures may or may not have lived, such as King Arthur or Robin Hood.

There are also legends attached to specific places. Such legends may relate to an actual event, such as the signing of a peace treaty under a so-called Treaty Oak. Or they may explain a feature of a place as being the result of a fantastic event, such as an indentation resembling a hoof print that is said to mark the spot where the devil stamped in anger after losing a soul.

Fiction and Literature

Storytellers often turn to fiction when searching for source material. Nonfiction books do not lend themselves as well to storytelling. The genre of fiction ranges from novels based on historic events to total fantasy.

Fantasy and science fiction describe adventures in both realistic and fantastic settings. Books such as J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series (1997–2007) and J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937) and *Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955) are prime examples of the fantasy genre.

In general, science fiction adventures are centered on the impact that science and technology have on the characters. Popular themes include space travel, time travel, and alien beings, as in Jules Verne's *Around the Moon* (1870) and H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898). Science fiction for children is fairly difficult to find, although many children love reading novels taken from the *Star Wars* (1977–2005) films and *Star Trek* (1966–2005) television series.

Mysteries engage listeners young and old, as the unraveling story leads the audience to discover "whodunit." Children's mysteries generally do not feature murders or other gruesome crimes, and early mystery series, such as the Nancy Drew books (the first was published in 1930), are still popular.

Animal stories can be about either wild or domestic animals. Within this genre are stories about the bond between animals and humans. These stories have long been favorites of children and have long been used by storytellers.

Adventure tales feature brave and clever heroes and dangerous villains. Early adventure stories might feature brave swashbucklers and pirates, while heroes in modern works may triumph over terrorists.

Historical fiction is exciting as well as educational, since it provides a glimpse of life ways and traditions from long ago. Realistic novels, also called problem novels, deal with real world issues, such as drugs and pollution. These have a more limited audience than some of the other "lighter" genres.

Stories both realistic and far-fetched that are set in foreign lands give listeners a look into other traditions and cultures that add an exotic touch.

Fairy Tales

Fairy tales are stories in which a series of fantastic events befall the protagonist and almost always lead to a happy ending. The best-known fairy tales are those written by the nineteenth-century Danish author Hans Christian Andersen.

Fairy tales usually open with the conventional, "once upon a time," which still holds power over listeners. Other beginnings from around the world include (origins are listed if known):

- It all happened long ago, and believe it or not, it is all absolutely true . . . (Ireland)
- Long years ago, in the early ages of the world . . . (Hungary)
- In a place neither near nor far, and a time neither now nor then . . . (Denmark)
- Once there was, twice there was, and once there was not . . . (Scotland)
- Long ago, so long ago I wasn't there or I wouldn't be here now to tell you . . . (Ireland)

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- Not in your time, not in my time, but in the old time, when Earth and the sea were new . . .
- At a time when people and animals spoke the same language . . . (Navajo)
- Once there was and once there wasn't . . . (Slavic)
- Back when it was a sin to talk too much . . .
- In the days now long departed . . . (Scandinavia)
- Long ago, when some folk were dead and others weren't born yet . . . (Tartar)
- It happened, it did not happen, it could perhaps have happened in the tents of our neighbors . . . (Arabic)
- Many years ago, in a time when memory was young . . . (India)
- Before the beginning of time, before the beginning of everything, before there was a beginning . . .
- Once, on the far side of yesterday . . .
- Once upon a time, and a very good time it was . . . (England)
- In a time not your time, nor my time, nor indeed anyone's time . . . (England)
- In a time when your grandfather was a wee baby, and turnips could talk . . . (Ireland)
- Long, long ago, in the days when animals talked like people . . . (used by many indigenous peoples)

All fairy tale plots follow a basic structure: The initial setup is a description of the setting and main characters—such as the poor farm and the poor family or the royal palace and the ugly princess. Then, a complication is presented—for example, the poor family's only son must leave home to find a fortune before his family starves, or the ugly princess must find a way to break the curse she lives under before she reaches her sixteenth birthday or she will never be free of it. The setup and complication are followed by a quest. This could be the son's efforts to succeed with royalty or rich merchants or the ugly princess's hunting to find the fairy who cursed her or a magician who can help her. Finally, there is the outcome, in which all problems are resolved and there is a happy ending.

There are also certain conventions that pertain to fairy tale characters. Listeners expect the characters to be somewhat familiar. The protagonist generally is possessed of one or more of the following attributes: He or she is young, is either of common or of noble birth, is the third son or daughter, has a good heart and is well mannered, and/or is a human without magical powers.

Similarly, villains generally fall into one of the following categories: He or she may be a wicked or insulted fairy, witch, or warlock, an evil aristocrat wanting the throne, a miserable miser, an officious official, a greedy or envious ruler, or a demon or devil (sometimes in disguise).

Descriptions of characters are minimal in fairy tales, as they are in folktales and myths. It is enough for readers to know that a character is kind of heart or fair of face. Peripheral characters often are not even given names but are placed in a story to move the action along. They simply go by descriptive monikers such as "the blacksmith" or "the tailor." Other detailed physical descriptions or identifications also are not included. In the Greek myth of Jason and the Argonauts, the Golden Fleece is never actually described. And further details are not required for such story elements as the "golden apples" or the "honest farmer."

Most, though not all, fairy tales include some element of the supernatural. When the hero is kind to an old woman, he may be given a magic box of never-ending coins or a flying carpet. These gifts are always taken in stride by fairy tale characters who accept the existence of magic without question.

Again, fairy tales almost always end happily, and villains are ultimately punished. The

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penalties generally are not described in graphic, sadistic detail, as they often are in folktales, but there is a feeling of satisfaction and justice achieved at the story's end.

Interestingly, what is considered a happy ending may vary, depending on the tale version. For instance, modern fairy tales do not always end in the traditional way, with the princess marrying a handsome prince. Instead, the princess might choose to start a democracy and run for public office.

As with the variable outcome, there are many variants of the familiar ending, "and they lived happily ever after" from around the world (origins are listed if known):

- Snip snap snout, now my tale is out. (Caribbean)
- Wires bend, stories end. (Caribbean)
- Crick! Crack! (Caribbean; also may be used to open a story)
- And maybe they did all live happily ever after, but how you and I live is up to us. (Western Europe and United States)
- And they lived happily ever after, but you and I are left here sucking on our teeth. (Eastern Europe)
- And that's the end of that. (Ireland)
- And the party lasted four days and four nights, and I've only just come away from it to tell you this tale. (Eastern Europe)
- And if you don't believe this story is true, go see for yourself.
- And ever since then, that's the way it has been. (widespread)
- And what happened next? Well, that's another story for another day.
- And so it was, and so it is, to this very day. (Ireland and Western Europe)
- Such things do happen, you know.
- And they lived happily ever after, or if they didn't, it's none of our business. (United States)
- And that, as well as being the end, was just the beginning. (modern)

Stories can take on many guises. But no matter what type of story one chooses to tell, a successful performance should leave the listener with the secure sense that all's well that ends well.

Collecting Stories

When researching source material, storytellers have a number of options available to them. A natural place to start is in the storyteller's own life. Stories shared with family and friends and those that reflect the cultural and ethnic background of the teller can be honed for larger audiences.

Personal sources should be handled with care, however. Those who are new to the practice of storytelling often make these personal stories much too long for most audiences. Before attempting to share this type of story, it is a good idea to listen to recordings of personal stories told by professionals to see how they have made them appealing to listeners.

Note that while recordings of professional storytellers can provide inspiration, care should be taken not to borrow directly from these sources. Permission from the original teller must be obtained before using copyrighted material.

A personal collection of literature is another good source for stories. Even stories that are recalled from childhood can provide excellent material.

There are many story collections located in public libraries (found in the section designated by the call number 398.2). Most librarians are happy to assist in selecting an appropriate anthology or even popular children's books.

Folk literature collections in particular are filled with wonderful tales. Storytellers seeking authentic folk literature should check the bibliography and back notes of folklore collections to find the origins of the material. The advantage to using folk literature is that much

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of it is in the public domain and free to use. If a folktale collection is made up of retold versions of the original tales as collected by tellers or scholars, this may not be the case and permission may be required. Another disadvantage is that some incidents in folktales may not make sense to modern listeners or fit into Western concepts of morality.

Care also should be taken in choosing folk sources, and storytellers must be respectful of other cultures when using this material. A Bantu tale, for instance, should not be told as a Cherokee tale, and the cultural source of any story should be mentioned in the telling.

The search for a story that a teller is comfortable with can be difficult and may entail reading dozens (or even hundreds) of stories before the right one is discovered.

Using Overheard Conversations

Many good stories are inspired by bits and pieces of conversation that have been overheard and even misunderstood in passing. Odd lines and weird phrases heard on the street or in a coffee shop can act as springboards for gripping stories. Storytellers should never intentionally eavesdrop, but using phrases or snippets of conversation that have been overheard accidentally as a starting point is a common practice.

Consider any of the following: "What did he do then?" "Did she really leave him?" "But what was a camel doing there?" "Are there dragons in the subway?" "What happened to it?" "But the cat found the passport first." When taken out of context, all of these bits of conversation are fragments of reality that can inspire stories.

The question, "What did he do then?" invariably leads to other questions, such as "Why did he do it?" "What was it?" or even "Who was he?" When a personality is created for this nameless character and "he" is given a situation that leads to action, all the elements are in place for a story to be spun.

Storytellers also should not overlook the possibilities that lie within their own families.

Collecting Family Stories

Family stories, whether from the storyteller's own family or other families, have a dual purpose. They provide new material and keep precious family histories and lore alive for later generations.

Some family members are more than happy to share stories, such as an uncle who loves to tell about how things were in his boyhood days. But some family members may be less enthusiastic about sharing information. They may claim they cannot remember the past or do not think their past experiences are important enough to repeat.

To use the former—the born family storytellers—as sources is simple. Their stories just need to be recorded and permission granted to share the stories. The latter, more reluctant informants may need some prodding to share their memories.

A storyteller who is gathering family or personal stories can ask the reluctant informant leading questions, such as, "Do you remember where you lived when you were five?" or "What was your favorite (television show, holiday, music, and so on)?" Other questions might include asking family members whether they had pets as a child, what they liked to do in their free time, who their friends were in school, and what the family did on vacations before the storyteller's time.

Such questions should not be delivered as a rapid-fire inquisition, but rather in the course of a general conversation. If a question receives no response, it should be dropped. The entire process should remain relaxed and cordial. As with any research, it is a good idea to dig for details. Remembered scraps of history can range from a teacher's name to what year the family went to Yellowstone National Park.

A family's history can be linked to historic events and eras, so that the past comes alive and remains vital. For instance, the story of a trip made during the Great Depression, as the family sought a new place to live and available jobs, ties the family history to the social history of the nation. Good stories also may lie in the

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real reason behind a nickname or why someone in the family changed his or her name.

In addition to preserving family history, researching family stories also benefits the storyteller, by providing insight into the past on a personal level.

Effective Storytelling

An effective storyteller is one who is able to communicate with an audience and move the listeners emotionally. Successful storytelling requires hard work and patience. All professional storytellers have had to jump many hurdles in order to reach their level of expertise. But even those who only plan to be "just-for-fun" storytellers can experience a certain amount of anxiety and apprehension, and they may have many questions about the process.

There are several levels of performance in storytelling: everyday storytelling, in which the events of the day are shared with the family; casual storytelling, which takes place at gatherings such as reunions, picnics, parties, and other social occasions; and formal storytelling to a group, which is the form that requires the most preparation. A formal situation might be a case of incorporating stories in a prepared speech or a performance by either an amateur or professional storyteller at a school or library.

Certain guidelines should be considered in the preparation and delivery of a story, regardless of the storyteller's level of expertise.

Selecting and Learning a Story

The first rule of effective storytelling pertains to story selection. It is imperative that the individual is comfortable with the story. A performer's lack of involvement in a story will come through in the telling. A performer's body language can reflect how much he or she likes (or dislikes) a story.

Professionals use several methods to learn a story. Probably the most common is to read the story many times until the story's "voice" becomes familiar. Then, the first part of the story is practiced until it feels right. This process is repeated with each section of the story, until the entire tale can be delivered in its entirety with confidence.

Strict memorization of a story can get a storyteller into deep trouble. If something causes the teller to lose track of his or her place in the story, it can be awkward for both the teller and the audience. A better strategy is for the teller to break the story down into parts and put it in his or her own natural language. (It should be kept in mind, however, that literary material should remain true to the original, and that some authors will not allow their stories to be told unless they are recounted word for word.)

First, a concise outline of the story's plot or a storyboard is created to determine the most basic plot elements. This outline is used as a springboard to relate the story in the teller's own words. The goal is to make it sound as if the events happened to the teller or a close friend or relative.

In order for a teller to "own" a story, a connection must be made with it. Storytellers should find parts of the story that intrigue them and utilize the strengths and talents that they possess to enhance the performance. Some storytellers use musical instruments, mime, facial expressions, poetry, and song. Others sit and tell in the traditional style, letting the story go through them using just the voice. It is important to remember only to use props when they enhance, rather than distract from, the telling.

Practice Techniques

Many instructors of storytelling workshops suggest that their students should "tell the story to the wall" several dozen times before performing for a live audience. Others suggest performing for a small group and admitting to the audience that the story is a work in progress. In the latter instance, the audience will not expect a perfect performance, which can ease the tension for the storyteller.

Once a casual group has been assembled, the teller should remind the audience that the performance is a practice session. Once finished, he or she might ask the listeners what

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they liked best about the story, encouraging them to discuss the performance. The audience should give suggestions about how story delivery might be improved. This type of feedback should not be sought until the performer is ready to accept constructive criticism.

Another technique is to share a variety of stories with friends and family. By telling and retelling, a performer can determine what works and what does not.

There are also organizations that provide venues and support for storytellers, such as the National Storytelling Network. Storytelling groups offer opportunities for sharing stories and getting feedback. The Toastmasters International club is another organization that provides opportunities for practicing speeches and stories. The members are happy to offer valuable feedback to budding storytellers.

After performing for a few small groups in a comfortable setting, a storyteller takes on the challenge of a larger audience. Schools, neighborhood scout troops, or any group of people in a community generally are happy to listen to stories. Another possibility is to volunteer at local libraries, daycare centers, and nursing homes. Most of these institutions welcome storytellers, and telling to these groups allows the performer to test material and discover the differences in telling stories to people of different ages.

Storytelling for a larger audience allows performers to refine both the content and delivery of their material. But the most important piece of advice for storytellers at all levels of expertise is to tell, tell, and tell some more.

Holding the Audience's Ear

There are several techniques that can help a storyteller keep an audience spellbound:

Know the Stories. The absolute first step is to know the stories well. Short pieces should be known by heart.

Use a Ritual. Much like athletes do before a game, storytellers create a "zone" just before going onstage. The best method of preparation is deep breathing, which feeds the brain cells with oxygen and makes you more alert. The audience can be brought into this breathing exercise. The storyteller might ask the audience to breathe along as follows: "In through the nose, one, two, three, four . . . and hold, five, six, seven, and exhale." Then, exhale through pursed lips (as if blowing out a match), "eight, nine, ten, eleven . . ." This is repeated slowly, three or more times. The exercise helps to increase the teller's energy, while also serving to calm and focus the audience. Once the ritual is complete, the audience is engaged and ready.

Discuss the Art of Listening. If the crowd is unruly or restless, the "art of listening" can be introduced. The audience is asked whether they ever have noticed that when a friend is talking, they are actually thinking of what they will say when their friend stops, rather than listening to what is being said. Most people will recognize the behavior immediately. The storyteller might mention that good listeners are never short of friends. This comment could be followed by simply saying, "Listen to this next paragraph." Now, the audience should be focused on listening.

Use Silence. Performers must be conscious of pauses between phrases. These natural pauses give the listeners time to absorb a story's images. Actors often use silence as punctuation, and, in performance terminology, *phrasing* is the use of silence and the way words are grouped between pauses to help shape what is being expressed.

Calm Your Nerves. It is believed that approximately 70 percent of people living in North American have an intense fear of speaking in front of others. This means that 70 percent of any audience would rather run away than trade places with a storyteller. Remembering this should help storytellers to keep their own "butterflies" in check.

Make the Best of Mistakes. If a mistake is made in an original work, the audience will not be aware of it. If the story is a "classic," however, the performer should not further

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disrupt the rhythm by apologizing, but should just take a breath and continue.

Focus on the Story. The message is more important than the messenger. The focus should always be on the story and not on the teller.

Storytelling Time and Timing

Anyone who has told stories knows the importance of time and timing. If used wisely, time can be a storyteller's best friend. When used without thought, however, time can ruin a performance and rob a teller of credibility, reputation, and the joy of experiencing eager listeners.

First, tellers always should pay close attention to the time that has been scheduled for a performance. A professional is on time—or even early—for a performance. The same consideration should be given to scheduling and performance length as is given to the selection of material. For example, when telling at a birthday party, a performer should try to avoid being scheduled at the beginning in order to avoid being interrupted by the arrival of latecomers.

Several things should be considered when planning the length of a program for children. Children from preschool through second grade will be attentive for about thirty minutes, especially if interactive rhymes, rhythms, and singing are included in the performance. Mornings work better for this age group, because the children still are fresh and eager. Children from eight to eleven years of age will easily remain entranced for forty-five minutes. Any time of the day is fine for them, but it is usually best to avoid performing right before a special party or recess.

Performances at junior high or high schools usually are subject to more rigid time constraints than those for the lower grades. When the bell rings, signaling the end of the designated period, the students must go to their next class, no matter how gripping the story is. Knowledge of the allocated time helps the teller set the pace.

Thus, stories should be timed beforehand and carefully planned out. The stories must fit the time limit. Often, a performance will not start on schedule, so stories may need to be shortened spontaneously, or shorter alternatives may be used. Practicing with a kitchen timer or even while driving (safely glancing at the car's clock) are good techniques.

Storytellers should never exceed their allotted time when performing in concert with other tellers. If other tellers go over their time, a conscientious performer will shorten his or her segment to get the program back on schedule. A short, punchy story or a well-sung ballad can make as much of an impression on the audience as a long, drawn-out tale.

Attention to the timing, pacing, and rhythm of a storytelling program guarantees a successful outcome. It generally is a good idea to intersperse short stories between longer ones. Following a long, gripping story with a short, snappy one will offer a break in the rhythm and even give the audience a little rest. It helps if the shorter stories are humorous or involve the audience.

The timing and pacing within each story also should be practiced. If a storyteller fails to vary the speed or to use pauses, the audience will be lost to drowsiness. The audience should have time to laugh, to *ooh* and *ah*, and to wonder what is going to happen next. In other words, tellers should not race through their stories. And at the end of each story, as well as at the end of the program, the performer should stay on stage long enough for people in the audience to show their appreciation.

Storytellers also are advised to take time off from storytelling efforts each week. Be sure to make time for intellectual play or other creative pursuits to reawaken and maintain an active sense of wonder.

Dual Storytelling

Also known as tandem storytelling, dual storytelling is the act of two storytellers performing a story together. When two tellers perform a

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story in tandem, different characters in the story are defined by the two separate voices and personalities. This technique adds variety to a story and makes a performance more like theater.

Dual storytelling requires carefully chosen partners. Obviously, the two must be compatible, as they must spend a great deal of time together, choosing and then practicing their story. Both tellers must like the story they choose. If only one of the partners enjoys telling the story, the difference in attitude will be obvious to listeners.

The shape of the story also must be considered. Some stories lend themselves better to two tellers. Dual tellers should look for tales that have two main protagonists.

Timing must be perfect in tandem telling. Seamless tandem storytelling requires a great deal of planning and practice, and both partners always must be ready to handle unforeseen mishaps. Dual storytellers must be sure that they know their parts and are familiar with each other's part, just in case one of them has a memory lapse. While a single storyteller may be able to recover with a simple, "Oops, I forgot to tell you," this tactic does not work as well with two storytellers.

Dual storytellers must decide who will do the introductions, who will begin the story, who will end it, and so on. A program that includes a story told in tandem also may incorporate some solo stories. The two storytellers can take turns performing, or one may tell a story while the other provides musical accompaniment.

As with solo performances, dual storytellers should exhibit joy in what they are doing. This enthusiasm is contagious and enhances the audience's experience.

Storytelling for Children

Storytelling to a young audience has many benefits, but it also poses some problems.

When accepting an invitation to tell a story to a group of children, the teller should find out the size of the group and the age range. There is a big difference between entertaining an intimate group of ten and performing for an entire auditorium full of children. It is also very difficult to tell stories to an audience with a large grade spread; stories for kindergartners will not work for middle-school students, for example. Therefore, if possible, the audience should be limited to one grade at a time, or two at most.

Even the youngest children can enjoy a storytelling performance, but the storyteller must understand the needs of this audience. Telling to children between the ages of two and five poses special challenges to the storyteller, but it also offers special rewards. Children at this age have very finite attention spans, so the teller must take care to choose the right stories and the right props to use. Watching the audience is important, since little ones can change moods almost instantly. A storyteller must be prepared to drop one story if the audience does not respond well and go on to another.

It is important to remember that all children, not just the youngest, have short attention spans. No matter how engrossing a performance is, squirms and occasional sighs or whispers are normal reactions from small children and should be expected.

Vocal interruptions, particularly if they have nothing to do with the story, should not be tolerated. Prior to the performance, it is a good idea to ask the teacher or librarian if there are any disruptive children in the group. These children should be placed up front so that they feel included in the story and are less likely to interrupt.

In choosing material for children, it must be remembered that many stories are not suitable for a younger audience. Some stories are intended for adults only, and others are just too complex or long-winded for children. Children prefer stories with action, humor, and, preferably, a happy ending. Some longer stories can be condensed for youngsters.

Stories with catchy rhythms or repeated phrases can be used to engage the audience.

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Children love to shout out repeated phrases. If a fairy tale is being read, it is customary to make a big deal out of the famous closing line, "and they all lived happily ever after." This guarantees contented sighs, happy squirming, and applause.

When setting up the performance space, there should be no distractions behind the performer, such as a window or bookshelf. It is best to perform in front of a bare wall or a blank blackboard. A story should begin after a moment of silence. This can be encouraged by telling the group that the story will not "work" until there is complete silence or by ringing a "magic bell" for quiet.

Once the story begins, the teller should try to make eye contact with each member of the audience. This is true whether the story is told or read from a book. In the latter instance, the storyteller should frequently look up from the book and out at the audience.

The actual performance should be as much theater as traditional storytelling, rather than a static recitation. The teller should interact with the audience and encourage children to participate by clapping hands, singing, and making funny noises. The storyteller needs to follow the children's guidance to know when to encourage them and when to quiet things down.

The basic rules are simple: Think like a child, have good material, have patience, and, above all, have fun.

Educational Storytelling

Storytelling is also a valuable teaching tool when used in the classroom, whether presented by a professional teller-guest or the classroom teacher. Except for an outside storyteller's fee, there are no costs to the school, and there is no expensive equipment to be bought or rented. Hearing stories told aloud trains students in their listening skills and the use of their imagination. The immediacy of live storytelling gives students a stronger sense of story than television or films. And the activity of listening to stories can help students become storytellers themselves, as well as better readers.

Storytelling can be smoothly integrated into the school curriculum. Although an outside storyteller may not have any input into the placement of a performance, a wise teacher will think about the most effective integration of stories into the school day. The most obvious place is during language arts, but storytelling also can work as part of social studies or history programs.

A lesson about the settlement of the West can be made more memorable by stories about the real but larger-than-life Davy Crockett or a fictional hero, such as Pecos Bill. Storytelling also can show the value of the cultural backgrounds of immigrant or minority students. Ethnic heroes such as West Africa's Sundiata, for example, appeal to all students and add to the self-worth of African American students.

The Journey

Students also can benefit from learning to tell stories. Storytelling improves imagination, language skills, a sense of plot and timing, and writing skills.

To help budding storytellers, a teacher or workshop leader can start out an oral storytelling session with a traditional story opening, such as "once upon a time" or a less familiar variant, such as "once there was and was not." Cumulative storytelling with a group is also effective, with one student taking the story as far as possible, then passing it on to the next student to continue. Even reluctant public speakers will become more comfortable the more often they tell a story.

The wonderful world of storytelling awaits in the following pages. Let the epic journey begin!

Ian Hutton
Flora Joy
Margaret Read MacDonald
Josepha Sherman
Suzanne Smith
Gail de Vos

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Aarne, Antti

(1867–1925)

Finnish scholar Antti Amatus Aarne specialized in folktale classification, sorting the various types of tales into categories. Aarne's most important writings—particularly his best-known work, *Verzeichnis der Märchentypen (The Types of the Folktale),* first published in 1910—are valuable catalogs of tale types and story summaries.

Born December 5, 1867, in Pori, Finland, Aarne attended college from 1889 to 1907, where he earned his master's and doctoral degrees in folklore. While preparing a series of three monographs on folktales for his dissertation, Aarne encountered difficulties in collecting materials and suggested to his mentor, Kaarle Krohn (1863–1933), the possibility of creating a complete inventory of Finnish folktales. With Krohn's approval, Aarne created such a system, drawing on collections by Danish folklorist Svend Grundtvig (1824–1883) and *Kinder- und Hausmärchen (Children's and Household Tales),* a collection by the German Brothers Grimm, Jacob (1785–1863) and Wilhelm (1786–1859). Although previous attempts at cataloging these folktales had been made, Aarne's classification system was a more useful scholarly tool, assigning numbers to and providing a brief summary for every tale type.

Part of Aarne's education took place in Russia from 1893 to 1898, when he was named headmaster of the Kokkola Finnish Coeducational School, a position he held until 1902. For the next eighteen years, Aarne taught at the Sortavala Lyceum. During this time, he became a docent in the field of Finnish and comparative folklore at the University of Helsinki, where he was supplementary professor until 1922.

In addition to being a folklorist, Aarne was a literature historian and ethnographer, and his research included studies of legends, riddles, old Finnish poems, and nature sounds. In his writings, Aarne acknowledged the arbitrariness of classification, as illustrated by the indistinct line between animal and wonder tales, and the overlap between genres and subgenres. He died on February 7, 1925.

After his death, Aarne's many monographs—including numerous publications in the Folklore Fellows Communications (FFC), a series of scholarly articles published by the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters—continued to be recognized as significant contributions to the field of folkloristics. Aarne's work *The Types of the Folktale* (FFC 3) was revised and enlarged by American folklorist Stith Thompson in 1928 as *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography.* Thompson published another revision in 1961. He praised Aarne's work and noted the scholar's conviction that "folktales had a unity that transcended individual motifs."

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Despite its Eurocentrism (focus on European tales), Aarne's work transformed folk narrative scholarship worldwide and continues to influence regional folktale indices. As recently as 1995, Aarne's/Thompson's *The Types of the Folktale* was translated into Spanish by Fernando Peñalosa and published as *Los Tipos del Cuento Folklórico: Una Clasificación*.

Maria Teresa Agozzino

See also: Tale Types; Thompson, Stith.

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Abassi/Abasi and Atai

(West African)

In the mythology of the Efik people in what is now Nigeria, Abassi was the supreme god and the father of humanity. His wife, Atai, was the mother.

Abassi and Atai had two children who wanted to leave heaven and settle on Earth. Abassi was concerned that the two children would raise a warrior race that could turn against him. But Atai convinced Abassi to permit the two children to live on Earth, as long as they agreed never to work or mate.

In spite of their promise, however, the children soon began to work at growing food and to mate. The Earth was soon full of their offspring. To save the world from overpopulation, Atai gave the people two gifts: argument and death. And so it is that humanity fights and dies.

However, even though Abassi never visited Earth, he did not forget about humankind, which was made up of his children's children. Abassi used Ikpa Ison, a fertility goddess who took the form of a vulture to fly between heaven and Earth, to let him know what was happening below. Thus, good people could be rewarded and evil ones punished.

See also: Death; West African Mythology.

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Abatwa

(South African)

In Zulu folkloric tradition, the Abatwa of South Africa are tiny, peaceful, humanlike beings.

Abatwa are described as living in anthills or wandering in the mountains, sometimes using anthills for shelter. Some accounts tell of Abatwa that live in dwellings that are only disguised to look like anthills for the safety of the Abatwa living there. The corridors and rooms within are ornamented with wall paintings and mosaics made of colored seeds.

These beings are so small that they can hide under blades of grass and ride on ants. Perhaps because of their small size, the Abatwa are shy of humans. Only children under the age of four, wizards, and pregnant women are able to see the Abatwa. If a pregnant woman sees a male Abatwa, it means she is carrying a boy; seeing a female Abatwa predicts the birth of a girl.

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The Abatwa are said to enjoy helping people, often giving them aid and good advice. But if the Abatwa are offended by a foolish human or if someone is clumsy enough to step on one of them, they shoot tiny but very poisonous arrows at the offender.

See also: Elf Shot/Elf Arrow; Leprechauns; Zulu Mythology.

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An undated rock carving from Australia shows a mythic being that combines human and nonhuman aspects. It probably is a representation of a spirit from the Dreamtime. *(Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY)*

Aboriginal Mythology

(Australian)

Australia's Aboriginal mythology is characterized by two main features. First, it is a predominantly oral tradition. Aboriginal society was, and still is in many cases, one of hunter-gatherers. As the Aborigines moved in search of resources, and as seasons changed, the mythology developed regional variations and differences peculiar to tribal groupings. Second, the mythology deals primarily with creation and the way that humans and nature interact. To the Australian Aborigines, everything is permeated with life, and this life is grouped into related families connected by a spiritual concept known as "the Dreaming."

In many cases, Aboriginal mythology serves as a sort of oral map, defining the boundaries of tribal territory and identifying the natural features that mark those boundaries. Local traditions generally stop at the point where another tribal grouping takes up custodianship of the land. Therefore, traditional tales are shared only by communities within the same boundaries. And, as with the tribal groupings of people, things and animals are classified and grouped by kinships as well.

The Dreaming/The Dreamtime

The Dreaming, also known as "the Dreamtime," originated long ago with the beginning of creation itself. It describes how creator-beings, who were neither human nor animal but had characteristics of both, formed the land, plants, animals, and humans. The concept of the Dreaming is at the heart of Aboriginal culture.

The creator-beings described in the Dreaming also created sacred places imbued with *djang,* or residues of their own energy. The performance of rites and rituals in these sacred places ensures the continuance of creation, which is seen by Aborigines as simultaneously finished and endless.

In the Dreamtime, the earth was a featureless plain, partially covered by water. When the ancestors (including great serpents that lived below the earth) awoke, they started to move and shape everything, forming many of the planet's natural features.

The period of the Dreamtime is seen as a metaphysical concept as much as a period in time. The Aborigines seek to bring forth the djang of the ancestral archetypes by engaging in sacred ceremonies. They believe that the life within them is a spark of the ancestors' djang. By awakening that energy, one can

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enter the Dreamtime, where all things are created and go on being created.

The Sky World

Above the earth lies the Sky World, seen by many as the home of ancestors that took part in the creation process of the Dreamtime. The stars are sometimes said to be the many campfires of the ancestors, or occasionally the light of the ancestors themselves. When a person dies, his or her soul may first go to the Island of the Dead, where it is purified, and then go on to the Sky World, the final resting place.

Most of the ancestors are totemic, taking the form of various native animals, including bandicoots, crocodiles, crows, curlews, dingoes, eagles, echidnas, emus, fish, flies, flying foxes, frogs, kangaroos, koalas, platypuses, seagulls, and several forms of serpents. These animal ancestors are woven into various fireside tales. Each tale contains a message about the Dreaming, the Dreamtime, or the natural order and continuance of the folkloric tradition.

All-Father and All-Mother

The most important deity in Aboriginal mythology is the All-Father. The All-Father came before the ancestors and before all things. Regardless of regional variations, the All-Father, or at times the All-Mother, is always known as the being from which all things came. Each All-Father sent a son to Earth to care for humanity, punish wrongdoers, and carry out the All-Father's plans.

The All-Father and his son are known by different names in different regions. In southeastern Australia, they are known as Biame or Biaime and his son Daramulun or Gayundi; in the Murray River area, as Nooralie and his son Gnawdenoorte; and in the Kurnai community, as Mungan Ngour and his son Tundun.

Biame, in the variants of the myths that are told today, experimented by creating the animals and then, based on this experience, created men and women. In the Dreamtime, animals had all the characteristics, emotions, and discontents of human beings. The kangaroo was ashamed of its tail. The insects wanted to be larger. The birds wanted to be like the kangaroos. The fish felt imprisoned in water. Biame gathered all the animals in a cave, removed these wishes and discontents, and placed the wishes and discontents in his new creations, the men and women. And so human beings, with all their discontents, became the custodians of nature, and they were watched over by the All-Father, who lives in the Sky World.

Biame also set out the laws by which humanity is meant to live and the sacred ceremonies that mark the passage from boyhood to manhood. These ceremonies occur in *Boro* circles, or *Boro* grounds, which are representations of the sacred Sky World where Biame lives. The uninitiated are forbidden to enter these sacred places.

The All-Mothers are also known by different names in different regions. The most important All-Mother is the chief wife of Biame, called Birraghnooloo. Gunabibi (or Kunapipi) is the northern Australian variant.

In some traditions, the Rainbow Serpent is said to be the mother of everything, but this deity is more often seen as either genderless or androgynous. The Rainbow Serpent is also the teacher and guardian of the secret healing rituals of the tribal shamans.

The Bull Roarer is an instrument, said to have been created by Biame, that is used in many of the ceremonies held in Boro grounds. A shaped and incised oval of wood, it is swung from the end of a long string, and the sound it produces is said to be either the voices of the ancestors or the voice of Biame himself. The sacredness of the instrument varies from area to area. In some regions, it is forbidden for women to look upon it. In other places, only the elders or initiated may see it. When carved with sacred designs, a Bull Roarer becomes a specific sacred object, known as *tjuringa* or *inma*.

Uluru

In addition to the Boro grounds, other sacred places are imbued with their own spirits or essences. In many communities, it is believed

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that certain places hold spirit-children, and it is to such places that women go if they wish to become pregnant.

One of the most important sacred places is Uluru, also known as Ayers Rock, in central Australia. Here, it is believed that oral tradition and song cycles are embodied by the sandstone rock, which towers 1,100 feet (335 meters) above the surrounding countryside. Uluru is divided in two halves—a shady side and a sunny side—which represent the opposing positions in the vast battle that marked the end of the Dreamtime and the beginning of the current age, a separation also representative of the division between generations.

James A. Hartley

See also: Bunyips.

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Abracadabra

Used by modern storytellers and stage magicians only as a pseudo-incantation, the word *abracadabra* has a long history as an utterance with magical powers.

The first known mention of abracadabra was made by the Roman poet Quintus Serenus Sammonicus in the second century C.E., but the origins of the term remain a mystery. There are several theories as to when and where the term was first used: It may be a combination of the first few letters of the Phoenician alphabet *(A-Bra-Ca-Dabra)*; the name of a demon of disease, whose origin is unknown; the Phoenician *Aramaiz avada kedavra,* which means "may the thing be destroyed"; or *abra kadibra,* meaning "it will be made like it is said."

Another possibility is that abracadabra originated from the Greek *abrasadabra,* which is said to be a mystical word used by a Gnostic sect in Alexandria, Egypt. This sect, the Basilidians, was founded by Basilides of Egypt, and their chief deity was *Abrasax* (*Abraxas* in Latin). The name Abraxas was said to have magical powers as a word that, when written in Greek, added up to 365, the number of days in the year. For this reason, Abraxas was often engraved on amulets and precious stones.

The term may derive from the initial letters of three Hebrew words: *Ab,* "the father," *Ben,* "the son," and *Acadsch,* "the Holy Spirit." In this form, the word was used as a charm, written in the shape of a triangle on a piece of parchment worn around the neck, that was believed to have the power to cure toothaches, malaria, and other scourges. Whatever its derivation, abracadabra most likely came from Greek into French, and from French into English.

See also: Hocus-Pocus.

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Abzu/Apsu

(Sumerian and Babylonian)

In the mythology of Sumer and Babylon, the creature called Abzu in Sumerian and Apsu in Akkadian was believed to be a vast ocean of freshwater lying beneath the earth. Water from this source sprang forth to the surface through springs, wells, streams, rivers, and lakes. Several Mesopotamian gods were thought to have inhabited the Apsu, including Enki; his wife, Damgalnuna; Enki's minister, Isimud; and a number of lesser deities.

In the Babylonian myth *Enuma Elish,* Apsu was the name of a primeval creature of the freshwater that lived before the creation of the world. From the mingling of Apsu and

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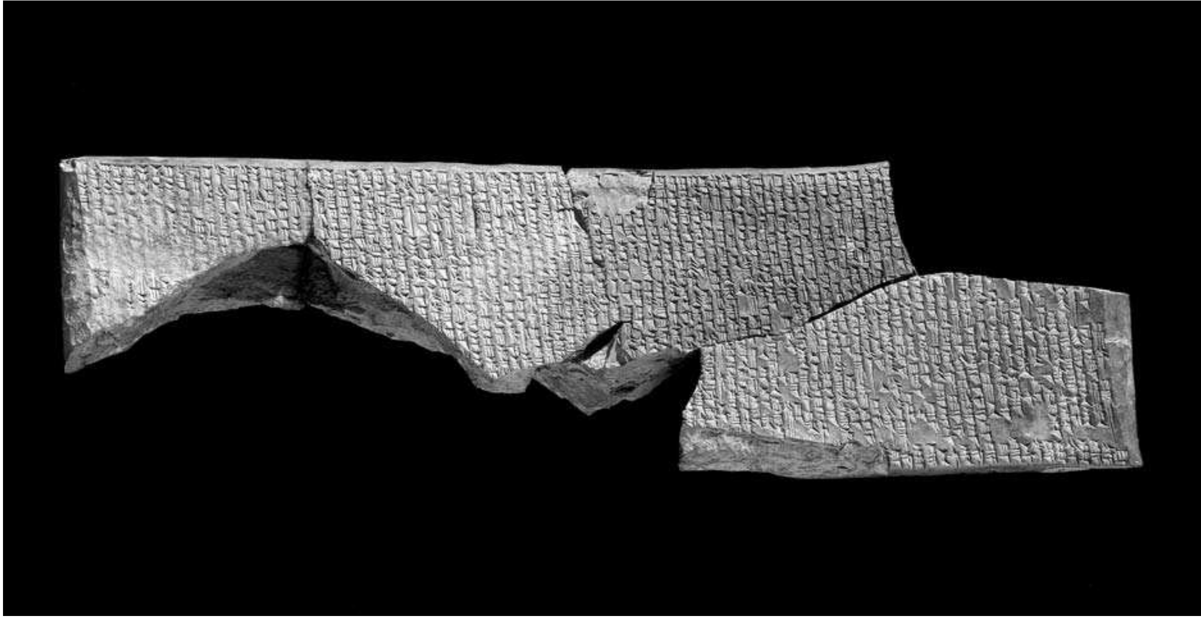

This seventh-century B.C.E. clay tablet—found in the ancient city of Nineveh, now part of northern Iraq—is one of a series that tells the Babylonian story of the creation of the gods Apsu and Tiamat out of the primal waters. Apsu planned to destroy the younger gods and instead died at the gods' hands. *(© British Museum/HIP/Art Resource, NY)*

Tiamat, who was the primal goddess of fertility and the saltwater sea, the lesser gods were born. These deities created an uproar that disturbed Apsu, their begetter, and prevented him from resting during the day and sleeping at night. Apsu resolved to do away with them. When the gods heard about Apsu's plan, they were shocked and angered.

Ea, the god of wisdom and magic, offspring of Anu, chief of the gods, came up with a plan to save the lesser gods. He cast a spell on Apsu, placing him in a deep slumber, and killed him. After the murder, Ea set up his dwelling on the dead god's body and called his new abode the Apsu. Ea and his wife, Damkina, settled there. Their son, Marduk, was formed in the Apsu and was known as the "firstborn son of the Apsu."

In Sumerian myth, the E-abzu (Apsu House) was the name of Enki's temple in the Sumerian city of Eridu. (Enki was the Sumerian form of the Babylonian Ea.) Abzu shrines also have been found in cult centers in several Mesopotamian cities.

In Mesopotamian thought, the Apsu was a place connected with demons, from which various evil gods and monsters were said to have come forth. The so-called Land of No Return, or the realm of the dead, lay beneath it. The *apsu* was also the name given to a large water basin found in some Mesopotamian temple courtyards.

Ira Spar

See also: Creation Stories of Mesopotamia.

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Achilles

(Greek)

In Greek mythology, Achilles was the son of the mortal King Peleus of Phthia in Thessaly and the immortal sea nymph, Thetis. He is

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often described as the greatest warrior of the Trojan War.

Thetis was worried about her newborn son and his defenselessness, due to his half-mortal parentage, so she took the newborn Achilles to the River Styx. She dipped the baby into the water, which had the power to make him invincible. But either Thetis neglected to dip the heel by which she was holding the baby or a leaf stuck to his heel and kept the water from touching it. As a result, Achilles's heel remained vulnerable. Still another version of the story states that when Achilles was a baby, Thetis rubbed him each day with godly ambrosia, and each night laid him on the hearth fire. His father, Peleus, came upon Thetis holding their baby in the flames and cried out in alarm. Thetis was offended and returned to the sea, leaving Achilles to his mortal fate.

When the Trojan War began, King Agamemnon of Mycene, the commander of the Greek forces, sent Odysseus and a group of soldiers to recruit Achilles. Thetis was afraid for her son and sent him, disguised as a woman, to King Lycomedes on the island of Skyros to live among the king's daughters. When the clever Odysseus arrived at Skyros, he saw through the disguise, tricked Achilles into revealing his identity, and convinced him to join the army.

During the last year of the Trojan War, Achilles quarreled with Agamemnon over possession of Briseis, a young woman Achilles had captured as a prize of war. When Agamemnon claimed her, Achilles took it as a deadly insult. He refused to fight the Trojans with Agamemnon and stayed in his tent. Without him, the Greek forces began to lose. Patrocles, Achilles's best friend, borrowed his armor to go into battle and was slain by Hector, prince of Troy, the greatest Trojan warrior.

Enraged, Achilles returned to the battlefield, slaughtering everyone in his path. He eventually killed Hector, aided by the goddess Athena. Hector's brother, Paris, shot an arrow into Achilles's one mortal spot—his heel—and Achilles died.

To this day, the phrase "Achilles' heel" refers to a vulnerable spot.

See also: Culture Heroes; Hector; Homer; *Iliad*.

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Adapa

(Babylonian)

In Babylonian tradition, Adapa was known as a wise man or sage from the early Sumerian city of Eridu. The myth of Adapa deals with the topic of mortality.

The Sumerian kings list, an ancient text listing the kings of Sumer, records the existence of five cities that predate the Flood. These early cities were ruled by eight legendary kings, each of whom reigned for one or more centuries. The first seven of these antediluvian rulers were served by semidivine counselors, called *apkallu,* who introduced learning and the arts to Sumer. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh,* the apkallu are said to have laid the foundation for the wall that surrounded Uruk. According to Babylonian legend, Adapa was one of the wise apkallu from the preflood city of Eridu.

An unnamed Babylonian poet penned a mythic story about Adapa that explores the enduring theme of human mortality. Why, the story asks, should humans be mortal and the gods immortal? The story opens with a description of Adapa as an ideal human being: ritually observant and perfect in wisdom. As a servant of the god Ea, Adapa performed the divine rites with great care, baking bread, preparing food and drink, setting the table with clean hands, and catching fish for Ea's cult at Eridu.

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One day while Adapa was out fishing, a south wind came up and capsized his boat. Adapa was thrown overboard and spent the day "in the home of the fish." Wet and angry, he cursed the wind, and the power of his spell broke its wings. For seven days, the wind was incapacitated, and the air was still over the land.

Annoyed, the supreme god, Anu, summoned Adapa to appear before him. Ea, knowing that Adapa would be granted an audience in heaven and not wishing to lose his services, advised Adapa to humble himself and stand in mourning garb with his hair disheveled as a sign of grief before Anu's gatekeepers, Dumuzi and Gishzida. Ea's plan was to so bemuse these two deities that they would intercede on Adapa's behalf and plead his case before Anu. Ea also advised Adapa not to accept heaven's hospitality and to reject any food or drink offered to him, for such offerings were the food and drink of death.

Upon his arrival in heaven, Adapa followed Ea's advice. He so amused the gatekeepers that they interceded and pleaded his case. When Adapa appeared before Anu, the supreme god offered him food and drink, a rite of hospitality performed only for visiting deities. Adapa declined the offering, not realizing that acceptance would have granted him eternal life.

Anu laughed at the sage's naïveté and asked him why he did not eat or drink. Adapa answered that Ea had advised him in the ways of heaven and that he was merely following Ea's instructions. Anu told Adapa that he had offered him eternal life and that his refusal meant that he would remain a mortal.

And so, because of Adapa's choice, all humans are mortal.

Ira Spar

See also: Death; Wise Man or Woman.

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Adon/Adonis

(Phoenician)

Originally, Adon was a Phoenician god of fertility and resurrection who was associated with crops and the seasonal agricultural cycle. His cult became popular during the Hellenistic period, about 200 B.C.E., and it lasted until about the third or fourth century C.E. Major cult centers devoted to the god, who was usually portrayed as young and handsome, were located at Berytus, Aphaca, and Byblos, in what is now Lebanon.

It is the myth of Adon's death and rebirth that is most commonly known. Adon, the consort of the goddess Ashtar (Venus, in Greek tradition), was slain by a boar that he was hunting. The fatal wound is often said to have been to the groin, adding to Adon's reputation as a fertility deity. After suffering this fatal wound, Adon, like the Greek Persephone, spent fall and winter of each year in the underworld.

In late spring, the river known today as Nahr Ibrahim flows red from minerals stirred up by spring rains. This phenomenon was taken to be a miracle by Adon's priests and worshipers, who then celebrated his death and resurrection. During the first part of the festival, the priests made a ritual show of mourning Adon's death, up to and including gashing themselves with knives. The festival proceedings then switched to a joyous celebration of Adon's return to a new life. The priests ritually shaved their heads to indicate a new beginning.

The Greek story of Venus and Adonis was well known through the Renaissance; Shakespeare wrote a lengthy poem titled *Venus and Adonis*. Gradually, the name Adonis lost much of its mythic power. Today, it is generally used to refer simply to a handsome young man.

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See also: Aphrodite; Dumuzi; Inanna/Ishtar.

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Adroa and Adro

(East African)

Adroa is a major god of the Lugbara, an African farming people living in what are now parts of Uganda and Congo.

Adroa was the all-good creator of everything, including himself. He divided himself in two to create the earth. But that which split off from his goodness became the evil earth-spirit Adro, who brought disease and other ills into the world. Because of this split, Adroa is represented as a tall, white-skinned man with only half a body, one arm, and one leg. Adro is rarely represented, but in those rare representations, he is portrayed as another half figure: half a body, one arm, and one leg, with jet-black skin.

Adroa's children are called the Adroanzi.

See also: Aiomum Kondi; An/Anu; Sius; Wele; Zeus.

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Adroanzi

(East African)

The Adroanzi are nature spirits, the children of Adroa, though some versions of the tales about them say that they are more properly the children of Adroa's dark half, Adro.

These beings live in streams, trees, and rocks. Those who live in water are described as looking like water snakes, possibly poisonous ones, but those Adroanzi who prefer to live in trees or rocks are not described.

The Adroanzi often follow anyone who is traveling at night. When they do, they generally act as protectors from human or animal predators. The human that is being followed must not look back at the Adroanzi. The protective creatures become fierce and attack to kill anyone who turns to look at them.

See also: Leshy/Leshiye; Tree Spirits.

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Aeneid

(Roman)

The literary epic the *Aeneid,* based on the story of the Trojan War, was written in the first century C.E. by the Roman poet Virgil. It follows the adventures of Prince Aeneas, son of Troy's doomed King Priam, after the fall of Troy and describes the myth about the founding of Rome.

The *Aeneid* begins with Aeneas and other Trojan survivors leaving the fallen city of Troy and setting out for new lands. The gods had heard a prophecy that the nation Aeneas founded would one day destroy Carthage, which was the favorite city of the goddess Juno. In an effort to save the city, Juno commanded the winds to drive Aeneas off course, but he landed in the countryside near Carthage.

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Aeneas, the last prince of Troy, and his companions battle the monstrous Harpies. This scene from the first-century C.E. epic the *Aeneid,* written by the Roman poet Virgil, is illustrated in a fifteenth-century tapestry. *(Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)*

Aeneas and Dido

Dido, queen of Carthage, offered her hospitality to Aeneas and his men. Aeneas recounted the story of the fall of Troy. His version expanded on the account in the *Iliad* and included the tale of the Trojan horse and the defeat of the city.

Aeneas also told of his flight from Troy. He and his men wandered for seven years, searching for a new home. They landed on Thrace but found it a dangerous place full of murder, and so continued on to Delos and Crete. There, Aeneas was sent a dream by the gods, telling him to settle in Italy. While sailing to Italy, he and his men encountered the harpies and the Cyclops. The group eventually landed safely on the island of Sicily. As they attempted to reach the mainland, they were blown off course and finally landed in Carthage.

By this point in the story, Dido and Aeneas realized they had fallen in love. But the gods insisted that Aeneas go to Italy. He sailed off without Dido, and she committed suicide.

Aeneas's Journey

Aeneas and his men returned to Sicily, and a fire destroyed four of their ships. Once they finally arrived in Cumae, Italy, Aeneas went to the temple of Apollo and asked for guidance. Apollo told Aeneas that he had to enter the underworld, find his father, and ask his advice.

On this mission, Aeneas endured many dangers. He was eventually able to cross the Acheron River and reach Hades. From there,

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Aeneas traveled through the underworld to the Elysian Fields, home of the blessed souls, where he was reunited with his father's spirit. The spirit told Aeneas the history of Rome. He told of the wars Aeneas would fight and of his destiny, which would lead to Rome ruling the world. When the story was finished, Aeneas returned to the world of the living.

Aeneas's ships reached Latium, ruled by King Latinus. This land was destined to belong to the Trojans, and Aeneas sent an envoy to the king with friendly messages. Latinus welcomed Aeneas and his men, and he offered his daughter Lavinia to Aeneas in marriage.

Victory at Last

Juno had not forgotten about Aeneas and created chaos throughout Latium. She roused King Turnus of the Rutulians against Aeneas, and the people of Latium against the Trojans. Aeneas traveled to Pallenteum to aid King Evander, but, in his absence, Turnus attacked the Trojans. Aeneas returned to Troy and won the battle. Turnus was killed in the fight. At last, Aeneas and the Trojans were free to begin building their nation.

The *Aeneid* has inspired several composers. Henry Purcell's 1689 opera *Dido and Aeneas* focused on the pair's doomed love affair. *Les Troyens,* composed by Hector Berlioz in 1863, told of the fall of Troy and ended with Aeneas's desertion of Dido.

See also: Epics; *Iliad;* Trojan War.

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Aesop and Aesop's Fables

(Greek)

According to the Greek historian Herodotus, Aesop was a slave who lived in Samos in the sixth century B.C.E. and was known for his fables. Although there is no real evidence of any fable having been created specifically by Aesop, one of the most familiar fables attributed to him is "The Hare and the Tortoise," in which "slow and steady wins the race." Another, in which a wolf disguises himself as a sheep only to be killed by the shepherd who thinks the wolf really is a sheep, has given us the phrase "a wolf in sheep's clothing."

There also is little hard evidence about the man himself. Aesop's birth date is unknown, and he is said to have died around 565 B.C.E. The folk process, by which folk stories are attached to a historic character over time, however, has added a series of adventures to Aesop's life that occurred after his master freed him. He is said to have visited and shared his wisdom with various Greek rulers, including Croesus. During the time when speaking freely

The artist and illustrator Arthur Rackham (1867–1939) pictured the characters in Aesop's fable "The Hare and the Tortoise" as nineteenth-century gentlemen. The elegant Hare is mocking the Tortoise before the start of the race. *(The Pierpont Morgan Library/Art Resource, NY)*

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was dangerous in Greece, Aesop's name became associated with the use of fables to convey antityranny messages.

In the third century B.C.E., an Athenian politician named Demetrius of Phaleron collected a group of about 200 fables and gave them the title *Aesop's Fables,* or *Assemblies of Aesopic Tales*. In the first century C.E., a freed Greek, or possibly a Roman slave, named Phaedrus issued a version in Latin verse. It is through these two collections that the story of Aesop has reached modern times.

To further confuse the matter, in the second century C.E., a Buddhist collection of fables reached the West and was combined with the Demetrius collection by a Greek writer, Valerius Babrius. This new compilation became the accepted version of *Aesop's Fables*. Some scholars suspect that the addition of a moral at the end of each fable is a result of Buddhist influence.

So many other additions have been made to the collection from other sources, especially after countless retellings, that no definitive version of the fables supposedly written by Aesop exists.

See also: Fables.

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Aetheopis/Aithiopis

(Greek)

The *Aetheopis,* or *Aithiopis,* is a lost epic of ancient Greece, possibly dating from the seventh century B.C.E. This epic poem about the Trojan War fits chronologically between Homer's *Iliad* and the anonymous *Little Iliad*.

The *Aetheopis* begins soon after the death of the Trojan prince and hero Hector. The queen of the Amazons, Penthesileia, daughter of the war god, Ares, arrived at Troy to fight on the side of the Trojans. Penthesilea fought Achilles, the greatest Greek warrior—a fight that ended in her death.

Later, while Achilles was still full of battle rage, the Greek warrior Thersites made the fatal mistake of taunting him. Thersites claimed that Achilles had been in love with Penthesileia. Achilles was outraged and killed Thersites. This murder incurred the wrath of the gods and other Greeks, so Achilles was made to undergo a ritual purification.

While Achilles was being purified of his sin, another Trojan ally arrived. Memnon of Ethiopia was the son of Eos, goddess of the dawn. Memnon wore armor that had been forged by the master smith god, Hephaestus, and he led a contingent of warriors. Memnon killed the Greek warrior Antilochos in battle. Antilochos had been close to Achilles, who returned from his purification to learn of his friend's death. Achilles killed Memnon, but Memnon cheated death when Eos successfully petitioned Zeus to make her son immortal.

Achilles then rushed into Troy and was killed by an arrow that was shot by Paris, prince of Troy, and guided by the god Apollo. After some fierce fighting, the Greeks managed to drive the Trojans back so that Odysseus and Aias could retrieve Achilles's body.

The Greeks held a funeral for Antilochos and began a ceremony for Achilles. The sea nymph Thetis, Achilles's mother, arrived with her sisters and the Muses, who lamented over the body and carried it away. The epic ends with Achilles's armor and weapons being offered as a prize to the greatest hero.

See also: *Iliad;* Trojan War.

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African Bushmen Mythology

The traditional home of the African Bushmen is the vast expanse of the Kalahari Desert in South Africa and Namibia. Many different groups are considered to be Bushmen, but they have no collective term for themselves. Some Westerners call them San, but this name is actually derogatory and the term *Bushmen* seems to be preferred.

The African Bushmen are traditionally hunter-gatherers. In many areas, however, these groups are being forced off their traditional lands and are making new lives as farmers and ranch workers. Following is a summary of the major deities in the mythology of their ancient culture.

Kaang, or Cagn, is the creator god of the African Bushmen. Kaang is said to have made all things but to have met with such opposition in the world that he went away. He is regarded as the god of natural phenomena, present in all things, but especially the mantis and caterpillar. He is a shape-shifter with many trickster and epic hero tales attached to him. Kaang has two sons, Cogaz and Gewi.

Other traditions name Hishe as the great self-created god who then created the lesser gods, the earth, humanity, wild animals, and vegetation. The northern Bushmen, however, call Huve (or Huwe) the beneficent Supreme Being and creator of all things. Huve is a deity of the forest. Mukuru is the benevolent ancestral god and creator god of the Herero Bushmen of Namibia. Mukuru brings the life-giving rain, heals the sick, and brings home the very old. Quamta is the supreme god of the Xhosa Bushmen of the Transkei in South Africa. The Xhosa god Xu is the benevolent and all-powerful Supreme Being and sky god to whom the souls of the dead go.

Tchue is a cultural hero and founder of the Bushmen.

As with other still-living mythologies, it is appropriate to research the beliefs of the Bushmen to ensure an accurate portrayal of current beliefs in any stories that are connected to them.

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Ahti/Ahto

(Finnish)

Ahti, or Ahto, is the Finnish god of the seas, lakes, and rivers.

Ahti's palace was hidden within a black cliff that was forever protected from the outside world, particularly from humans, by the waves and clouds. A gloomy deity, Ahti was forever jealous of the gods of the sky and spent a great deal of time brooding because the people prayed to them and not to him.

He could give humans fish if it pleased him. To punish them for not worshipping him sufficiently, Ahti often sent his servants, the water sprites, to whip up whirlpools instead.

Ahti's wife, Vellamo, enjoyed drowning humans.

See also: *Kalevala.*

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Aigamuxa

(South African)

In the mythology of the Khoikhoi people of South Africa (formerly called the Hottentot people), the Aigamuxa were man-eating monsters that looked like large, thin, long-armed apes with long fangs.

The Aigamuxa could sometimes be found hiding behind sand dunes, ready to catch and devour any unwary humans. Fortunately for those humans, the Aigamuxa were hampered by the fact that their eyes were positioned on the insteps of their feet, causing them to run blind.

If the Aigamuxa wanted to see where they were going or what was happening around them, they had to get down on their hands and knees or lie down. This gave their prey time to escape, which is presumably why the Aigamuxa were always portrayed as hungry creatures.

See also: Khoikhoi/Hottentot Mythology.

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Aino

(Finnish)

In the *Kalevala,* the collection of Finnish epic folk ballads, Aino, whose name means "the only one" or "the one and only," is the beautiful sister of the brash young magician Joukahainen.

When Joukahainen rashly challenged the old wizard Vainamoinen to a duel of singing magic, the youngster lost and, to save his life, recklessly promised his sister to Vainamoinen. When Aino discovered that she had been promised to Vainamoinen, she could not bear the thought of being the old man's bride. Her family wanted the marriage for the honor it would bring them, and Vainamoinen promised to be kind to her and vowed that as the master of song-magic he would give her anything she desired. In spite of this, Aino mourned that it would have been better for her never to have been born, and threw herself into the ocean to drown. Some variants of this tale imply that she transformed into a fish rather than dying.

Aino's tragic tale is one of the more popular in Finnish folklore. A postage stamp was issued in 1997 showing Aino escaping Vainamoinen and hurling herself into the sea.

See also: *Kalevala.*

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Aiomum Kondi

(South American)

In the mythology of the Arawaks of Guyana, Aiomum Kondi was the ruler of the gods and the sky.

Aiomum Kondi, or the Inhabitant of the High, created all living things, including mortals. But he soon became disgusted by the debauchery of humans and destroyed them in a fire from heaven. He remade the humans, but they disappointed him once again, and so Aiomum Kondi sent a flood to wash them away.

There was one good man, a chief named Marerewana, whom Aimum Kondi warned of the flood. Marerewana saved himself and his family by taking shelter in a large canoe that was tied to a tree.

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See also: Amun/Amen/Amon/Amun-Re; An/Anu; Sius; Wele; Zeus.

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Ajok

(North African)

In Sudanese mythology, Ajok was the creator, a deity who made humankind in his own image. Ajok was believed to be a benevolent deity, who would remain compassionate only if the behavior of humankind allowed him to remain so.

When the child of the first man and woman died, the grieving mother pleaded with Ajok to return the child to life. Ajok complied. The woman's husband was so furious that he had not been consulted that he killed his wife and child.

Ajok, who had planned to grant immortality to humans, vanished from the earth and left behind a warning that from then on, death would be permanent.

See also: Death.

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Alalu/Alalus

(Hittite)

Alalu was a Hittite deity also known as Alalus. He was the king in heaven in the earliest days.

Later, Anu was the first among the gods, second only to Alalu. As second, Anu served as Alalu's cupbearer. He served for nine years. Then, he fought and defeated the older deity and dispatched Alalu to live under the earth.

See also: Anu.

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Amadis of Gaul

(Spanish or Portuguese)

The medieval work *Amadis of Gaul* and its sequels originated in either Spain or Portugal and is regarded as the first epic fantasy adventure series.

It is not known where or by whom the original *Amadis of Gaul* was written. The work may have been written by Portuguese author Joao de Lobeira in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, but no manuscript has been found. The epic was translated into Castilian Spanish by García Ordóñez de Montalvo in the sixteenth century. The latter was a best seller in its own time and is the version that is best known today.

The Story of Amadis

The plot of *Amadis of Gaul* is intricate, as are most stories of this genre. Set in and around England just after the Roman era, it follows the pre-Arthurian adventures of the great knight Amadis.

As an infant, Amadis, who was the illicit offspring of King Perion of Gaul and the lady Elisena, was put in a basket to float down a river to the sea. The baby was rescued by the noble Gandales, who called him "Child of the Sea." Gandales raised Amadis along with his

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own son, Gandalin. King Perion and Elisena had two more children, a daughter named Melicia and a son named Galaor. The latter was kidnapped by a giant who raised Galaor as his own.

King Lisuarte of England placed his lovely daughter Oriana in the household of King Perion. Amadis had since returned to his father's house to work as a page, but his true identity was unknown. The young Amadis, known to all as Child of the Sea, became Oriana's page, and the two fell in love.

The sorceress Urganda the Unknown had prophesied that Child of the Sea would be the greatest of knights—the strongest, the most honorable, and the most loyal in love. King Perion knighted Amadis. In turn, the hero knighted his brother, Galaor, who had by then been released by the giant. It was at this point that the two brothers learned each other's true identities.

Amadis and Galaor became knights-errant, rescuing damsels in distress, eliminating false knights, and battling every menace, from giants and terrible beasts to evil wizards. And while Galaor dallied with many ladies, Amadis remained true to his love, Oriana. The tale ended happily and left an opening for further adventures.

Montalvo's translation was a great success. Like modern fantasy epics, the story was spun into a series that followed the adventures of Amadis and those of his descendants. The series included twelve books, the success of which led to imitators.

The Fantasy Fad

One such imitation was written by the Spaniard Francisco Vázquez de Coronado. His initial work, *Palmerin de Oliva,* about a heroic knight, and its sequel, *Primaleon,* about the adventures of Palmerin's son, were the first of many such tales. Portuguese writer Francisco de Moraes followed up with *Palmerin of England.*

The success of *Amadis of Gaul* eventually led to a glut of generic and often poorly written fantasy series. The craze for generic fantasy grew so large that it was parodied by Miguel Cervantes in *Don Quixote,* in which the old don went mad from reading too many fantasy adventures and thought he was a hero-knight himself. Cervantes's satire managed to put an end to the fantasy adventure craze—at least for that era.

See also: Fantasy.

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Amazons

(Greek)

In Greek mythology, Amazons were warrior women who lived apart from men.

In the *Iliad,* Amazons are described as *antianeirai,* a Greek word that means "those who go to war like men." The Greek historian and occasional tale teller Herodotus (c. 484–c. 420 B.C.E.) described the Amazons as *androktones,* which means "killers of males." Tradition says that they lived in Asia Minor, in what is now Turkey.

The Amazons are said to have gotten their name from the Greek word *amazoi,* or "breastless," referring to a belief that the Amazons cut or burned off their right breasts to make it easier to draw a bow. The Amazons, who are almost always pictured as fighting on horseback, are sometimes shown using swords or axes.

They were said to take their mates as it pleased them and then either enslave, kill, or sometimes release the men once the Amazons

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This illustration from the thirteenth-century C.E. manuscript "*Li Livre des Ansienes Estories,*" or "The Book of Ancient Stories," depicts a fierce battle between the Amazons, who are led by their queen, and the Trojans. *(Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)*

had become pregnant. Female babies were kept and male babies were either killed or, in some accounts, returned to the father's people.

There are several tales in Greek mythology about the Amazons. In the *Iliad,* one of the nine labors imposed on Hercules was to travel to the land of the Amazons and bring back the girdle of Hippolyte, the Amazon queen.

In the process of completing this mission, Hercules fought and killed Hippolyte, and her sister Penthesilea became queen. She and her Amazon army fought on the side of King Priam of Troy during the Trojan War. In a slightly conflicting version, Theseus, king of Athens, abducted and married either Antiope, a sister of Hippolyte, or Hippolyte.

There is no proof that the Amazons of Greek myth were based on reality. There is, however, evidence throughout the world of the existence of women warriors.

The Sarmatian women, of Asia Minor, could not marry until they had taken an enemy's head in battle. Celtic women often fought alongside men. If a Celtic family had no son, the firstborn daughter was trained for combat. In Africa, the king of Dahomey was protected by a female bodyguard, as was the king of Thailand. The daughters of noble Japanese families were trained for battle. Vietnamese women were savage warriors who fought on both sides in their civil war, and many Russian women were decorated for valor during the two world wars.

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A recent incarnation of the Amazons was the title character of the television series *Xena, Warrior Princess,* which aired from 1995 through 2001.

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Amled/Amleth

(Danish)

Amled, or Amleth, was a possibly historic but probably was a fictional fifth-century prince of Jutland. Amled's story is told in the *Gesta Danorum (Story of the Danes),* written in the late twelfth century by Saxo Grammaticus. Amled's story provided the basis for William Shakespeare's *Hamlet.*

Orvendel, son of a chieftain, was named by King Rork to be the leader of the armies. He married the king's daughter, Geruth, and they had a son, Amled. Orvendel's brother Fenge was jealous of Orvendel's success. He murdered Orvendel and forced Geruth to marry him, claiming that he had saved her from a cruel husband.

Amled knew that his life was in danger from his murderous uncle. He feigned insanity in order to protect himself. Fenge tried to prove that this was merely a ruse by sending a spy to watch Amled with his mother. Amled killed the spy and raged at his mother for so meekly giving in to Fenge. Geruth promised to hold herself back from Fenge.

Geruth's resistance led Fenge to further suspect Amled of treachery. But he could not murder the son after having murdered the father, so he sent Amled to England with two guards. The guards carried a secret message for the king of England that asked the king to kill Amled. Amled managed to switch the message to one that asked the king to have his daughter marry Amled. The hero killed the two guards and charmed the king, winning the hand of the princess.

Amled then returned home to take revenge. He set fire to Fenge's hall, killing Fenge's men, and finally killed Fenge. Amled succeeded Fenge as king of Jutland.

The story of Amled is told in the 1994 motion picture *Prinsen af Jylland (Prince of Jutland),* called *Royal Deceit* in the English version, and a 2002 Danish musical, *Amled.*

See also: *Gesta Danorum;* Saxo Grammaticus.

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Amphisbaena

(Greek)

The amphisbaena is an imaginary creature of ancient Greece—a poisonous snake- or lizardlike being with a head at each end of its body. It may well be an ancestor to the pushmi-pullyu character in the Doctor Doolittle books or to the cartoon character Catdog.

In medieval bestiaries, which are catalogs of real and imaginary animals and birds, the amphisbaena is described as a serpent (or sometimes as a lizard or even a cross between a bird and a snake) with a head at each end of its body and brightly shining eyes. Its name is Greek for "goes both ways," and the belief in such a creature goes back at least to the first century B.C.E. in Greece and Rome.

The amphisbaena is said to eat ants, which perhaps gives a hint as to its true origin.

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Anteaters have tails that could be mistaken for a second head.

For the amphisbaena to travel swiftly, it held one head in the other's mouth and rolled. If it was chopped in half, the two parts joined up again. Unlike true reptiles, the amphisbaena could survive in cold temperatures.

The creature also was believed to have medicinal properties. According to tradition, wearing a live amphisbaena would protect a child in the womb—although how this was determined is difficult to say. Wearing a dead amphisbaena was supposed to cure rheumatism.

There is a real amphisbaena that was named for the mythical one. This amphisbaena is a type of legless lizard found in the tropical Americas that burrows in the earth. Unlike its imaginary cousin, it has only one head, but its tail is said to resemble a head.

See also: Bestiary.

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Amulets

Amulets are objects that are believed to have the mystical ability to ward off evil. Amulets are said to be a particularly effective defense against the so-called evil eye, which is the deliberate casting of evil from a look. Amulets also can be worn to bring good luck.

Some amulets may be natural objects, such as certain nuts or berries, the rare four-leaf clover, or a stone with a hole in it. Others may be worked out of almost any kind of material, including ivory. Amulets are often made out of metals such as iron, which is said in folklore to provide powerful protection against evil, and are frequently engraved with magic symbols or inscriptions.

This Persian glass amulet of a dolphin's head has blue eyes. Both dolphins and the color blue often were considered lucky. *(Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)*

Semiprecious stones are commonly used as amulets as well, as are images of eyes. Blue is said to be a good color to ward off evil. In the Near East, blue glass beads, often set with inlaid images of eyes, are sold as amulets against the evil eye.

Amulets are often worn around the neck or as rings, especially in the form of jewelry. In the modern world, many people who wear amulets or good luck charms as jewelry are unaware of their significance.

See also: Talismans.

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Amun/Amen/Amon/Amun-Re

(Egyptian)

Amun was the chief god throughout most of Egyptian history. He rose to prominence around 2061 B.C.E., when rulers at Thebes reunified the country after a time of political disunity. Amun was, over time, compounded with other deities, particularly the sun god, Re, and the creator gods, Atum and Tatanen. Amun became revered as a self-created deity who maintained his secrecy.

Amun became known as the *ba,* or life force, within everything in existence, including gods. Amun was considered to be unfathomable by any other being, mortal or divine. The Egyptians honored him as a supreme benefactor of humankind, who bestowed the individual blessing of life and received praise from powerful and poor alike. Amun was sometimes simply called simply Ankh, meaning "life."

This wall relief, which dates to the Twentieth Dynasty (1196–1080 B.C.E.) of the New Kingdom, is on the north wall of the main temple of Pharaoh Ramses III. It depicts the Theban Triad, the three main deities of the city of Thebes: (left to right) the god Amun, the goddess Mut, and the god Khonsu. *(Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)*

Amun was the local patron of Thebes, the paternal figure in a Theban triad of deities—Amun, the vulture goddess Mut (mother), and the youthful moon god Khonsu.

Although Amun's true form was said to be unknowable, artists have portrayed him as a man with a crown surmounted by two feathers. He also appears as a curly-horned ram or as a criosphinx, a ram-headed lion. His original, sacred animal was a goose.

The Greeks and Romans saw Amun as an aspect of Zeus and Jupiter.

Noreen Doyle

See also: Aiomum Kondi; An/Anu; Sius; Wele; Zeus.

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An/Anu

(Sumerian)

The sky god, An, was one of the principal deities in the Sumerian pantheon. Known as Anu in Akkadian, his name was often written with the cuneiform numerical sign for the number sixty. Other gods were assigned smaller numbers to show their lower status. In some myths, An is considered the father of the gods, while in other cosmological traditions he is the god in charge of the heavens following the separation of heaven and Earth.

An appears in a number of myths. Here are summaries of a few common tales:

- The story of Atra-hasis, in which An and a fellow deity, Enlil, grant him eternal life.

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- The myth *Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven,* in which An's daughter, the goddess Inanna, threatens to release the dead from the netherworld if she is not given control over the bull, which she wants to use to punish the hero-king Gilgamesh for spurning her amorous advances.
- A myth about the elevation of the goddess Inanna, in which she states that the word of An, the father of the gods, is the ultimate authority; that his commands are the very foundation of heaven and Earth; and that it is An who conferred kingship upon earthly rulers.

Although the Sumerian mythic tradition accords An a place of prominence, his inner nature is never clearly defined, and his representation in ancient art remains obscure.

Ira Spar

See also: Aiomum Kondi; Amun/Amen/Amon/Amun-Re; Sius; Wele; Zeus.

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Anansasem

(West African)

In the storytelling traditions of the people of Ghana, Benin, and the Ivory Coast, *anansasem* are spider stories, a class of folktales named such after the spider trickster Ananse.

Ananse is said to have attained the title to all stories after winning a trial set on him by the sky god, Nyankomsem. Ananse was given three supposedly impossible tasks to accomplish, which he did, of course, by trickery.

Stories are referred to as anansasem stories, whether the spider takes part in the story or not. These stories are told for group entertainment and are distinguished from myths. They are also known as "words of a sky god" in honor of Nyankomsem, the deity who possessed the title for all stories before Ananse won them.

See also: *Retelling: Why Ananse Owns Every Story.*

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Animal Bride or Bridegroom

The world folktale type of the animal bride or bridegroom involves a human who marries an animal that is eventually transformed into a human (or at least a human-seeming being). The most familiar of these stories is the classic French tale "Beauty and the Beast," written by Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont.

The main difference between this tale type and that of the animal helper (the animal who aids the hero) is that the former is always a human in its transformed shape while the latter may or may not be a human in disguise.

The animal bride takes the form of a variety of animals: frog, swan, cat, mouse, and even wolf. In some Slavic tales, for instance, the bride is a frog that becomes a beautiful princess when the hero keeps his promise to marry her. This is related in theme to the Arthurian story "Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell." In that tale, the bride is hideous until the hero marries her and gives her "what every woman wants," namely her own will.

The animal bride is featured in tales from around the world in a number of guises: a

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mouse in a tale from Sri Lanka; a frog in tales from Austria, Germany, Italy, and Myanmar; a wolf in a tale from Croatia; a dog or a cat in tales from India; a tortoise in a tale from Arabia; a bear in a tale from the Nez Perce people of the American Northwest; and a monkey in a tale from the Philippines.

Related to these tales are those of the swan maidens and Celtic *selkies,* or seal people. In these cases, the transformation into human form is not permanent; the being is able to switch back and forth between forms.

The animal bridegroom also takes a variety of forms: a bear in tales from Scandinavia, the Pueblo people of the American Southwest, and the Tsimshian people of the Pacific Northwest; a serpent in tales from China, Russia, and the Passamaquoddy people of the northeastern United States; a dog in a tale from England; a pig in a tale from Turkey; and a lizard in a tale from Indonesia.

See also: Motifs; Tale Types.

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Animal Helper and Grateful Animal

The motif of an animal helper is found in folktales and myths from around the world. There are two main variations on this motif: either a human hero is aided by a magical animal or the animal is the hero of the tale. In the latter version, the animal hero generally aids a human character. Another closely related folk character is the grateful animal. This creature is not necessarily magical, though it may be able to speak, and the hero receives the animal's help in return for saving its life.

Perhaps the most familiar story featuring an animal helper is "Puss in Boots," in which a nattily dressed feline helped his human friend rise to nobility and achieve a happy marriage. Although the version most often cited is the one written by French courtier Charles Perrault, the story has earlier counterparts in world folklore. In Western Europe, these versions generally feature a cat, but in Eastern Europe the helper is more likely to be a fox, such as in the Armenian tale "The Miller and the Fox." In other folktales, the helper may be a wolf, as in the Russian tale "Ivan and the Great Grey Wolf"; a gazelle, as in some African tales; or even a fish, as in the Chinese Cinderella tale "Yeh-hsien."

The most common version of the grateful-animal folktale features a human hero who helps three animals. The three later return the favor, usually by helping the hero to overcome a monster and win a bride. The grateful animals often share a language in common with the hero—a phenomenon that is often explained away as having happened in the long ago days when people and animals could still communicate with each other verbally.

A variation on this theme is the tale of the ungrateful man. In this type of story, the man does not appreciate the animals' kindness. He usually comes to a bad end and is sometimes even slain by the animals.

See also: Motifs; Tale Types.

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Antar

(Middle Eastern)

Antar was an Arab warrior-poet in the seventh century who has become a cultural hero. Many epic poems have been written

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about Antar and his real and fictional adventures.

Antar was said to have been the son of Shaddad, a well-respected member of the tribe of 'Abs, and an African slave woman. Because Antar was dark-skinned and his mother was a slave, the rest of the tribe treated him as an inferior in spite of his accomplishments.

A born survivor, Antar had to fight for food and at a very early age killed a dog over a piece of goat meat. At age ten, he slew a wolf that was after the tribe's herds. But when he fell in love with his paternal cousin, the beautiful Abla, her father would not allow them to marry. Antar had to face a series of challenges before the marriage could go forward, including a quest for a special breed of camel from a northern Arab kingdom.

Antar excelled as a warrior. Shaddad finally acknowledged him as his free son and asked Antar for help in battling another tribe.

It is not known how many stories of Antar's exploits are factual. Some of his poetry still exists. It is full of chivalry and love for Abla. He also included full descriptions of battles, armor, and other subjects that make his poetry useful for historians.

Antar's prowess as both a warrior and a poet gave rise to many tales over the centuries. He was the hero of the popular Arabic epic *Sirat Antar,* which was loosely translated as the *Romance of Antar* and thought to be the work of the writer Al Asmai (739–831 C.E.). In this story, Antar is presented as the ideal of a Bedouin chief—generous, brave, and honorable.

The nineteenth-century Russian composer Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov was inspired by the story of Antar and created a symphonic suite in four movements about his life. The first movement is set in the desert of Sham among the ruins of the ancient city of Palmyra. Antar had taken refuge there after becoming disillusioned with his fellow man. He witnessed a beautiful gazelle pursued by a huge dark bird. Antar attacked the bird and frightened it away. He then fell asleep and dreamed of a splendid palace ruled by the Queen of Palmyra, the fairy Gul Nazar. It was the queen, in the form of a gazelle, whom Antar had rescued. In gratitude, the fairy queen promised Antar the three great joys of life—revenge, power, and love.

Antar awoke among the ruins of Palmyra. The piece continues with Antar's use of the joys of revenge and of power. The last movement concentrates on the joy of love. Antar made Gul Nazar agree to take his life the moment she noticed that his passion for her was cooling. In the end, she does so, and Antar dies in her arms.

See also: Epics.

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Antero Vipunen

(Finnish)

The Finnish earth-giant and wise man, Antero Vipunen, resided just below the topsoil. As he slept, he absorbed nature's secrets.

The wizard Vainamoinen was building a magic boat and lacked an essential binding spell. He went to wake Antero Vipunen, who knew the spell and, in some versions of the story, kept the spell in his stomach. Shouting failed to awaken the giant, as did shaking him. At last, Vainamoinen poked a branch down the giant's gullet. Antero Vipunen yawned and swallowed Vainamoinen.

Stuck in the giant's stomach, Vainamoinen built a magic smithy. This finally disturbed Antero Vipunen, who coughed Vainamoinen back out again, along with the binding spell. The annoyance gone, Antero Vipunen slumbered on.

See also: Giants; *Kalevala;* Vainamoinen; Wise Man or Woman.

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Antichrist

(Christian)

In Christian belief, the Antichrist is said to be the archenemy of Jesus Christ and the powers of good. The New Testament warns that the Antichrist will appear and lay waste to all that is around him, corrupting the hearts of men and women, turning brother against brother, and heralding the cataclysmic end of the world. However, although the term *Antichrist* appears four times in the Book of John, it refers not to a specific figure but simply to anyone who opposes Christ.

By the end of the first millennium C.E., the Antichrist had been combined with other figures from the New Testament, such as the so-called second beast of Revelations. The general idea of an Antichrist as someone opposing Christ or Christianity had evolved into *the* Antichrist, a Satanic individual. It was generally believed in Western Christianity that the Antichrist would be known by the number 666 and that it would shrink from any symbols of Christianity, including the crucifix.

In the Middle Ages, it was believed that the Antichrist would first appear on Earth in the Holy Land, Jerusalem. This was given as one reason for the First Crusade of 1095—to expel the Saracens and other heathens before it was too late.

During the Renaissance, Christianity split into two factions, the Catholics and the Protestants; each accused the other's leader of being the feared arch-destroyer. Today, any unpopular public leader may be branded an antichrist without any significant religious meaning. The number 666 is frequently used in horror fiction and motion pictures.

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Antigone

(Greek)

The story of Antigone comes from Greek mythology, but its themes of civil war and defiance of authority are timeless. Antigone was one of the unfortunate children of Oedipus and Jocasta. Her story has been retold in many forms, including modern interpretations and plays.

When Oedipus blinded himself and went mad after learning that he had unknowingly married and mated with his mother, Antigone and her sister Ismene stayed at his side until his death.

Eteocles and Polyneices

The sisters guided Oedipus from Thebes to Athens. Their brothers, Eteocles and Polyneices, had been cursed by their father. They agreed to share the kingdom of Thebes by reigning in alternate years. In the first year Eteocles ruled, but when the year ended he refused to surrender the kingdom to his brother. Polyneices fled to Adrastus, king of Argos, who gave him his daughter in marriage and an army to help stake his claim to the kingdom. This led to the celebrated expedition of the so-called Seven Against Thebes, the battle in which seven champions fought against Eteocles. The Seven were defeated and killed.

The civil war continued for years, with limited success. Eventually, both sides agreed that the brothers should decide their quarrel in single combat. They fought and fell by each

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other's hands. The armies then renewed the fight, and at last the invaders were forced to yield. They fled, leaving the dead unburied.

The uncle of the fallen princes was Creon, Jocasta's brother. Creon became king and had Eteocles buried with distinguished honor. He ordered that the body of Polyneices be left where it had fallen, forbidding anyone to give him a proper burial.

Antigone Returns to Thebes

After her father's death, Antigone's life had vastly improved. She returned to Thebes and was engaged to Creon's son Haemon. But following the death of her brothers, Antigone heard of the edict consigning Polyneices's body to the dogs and vultures. She could think of nothing but giving her brother a proper burial, and so she refused to marry Haemon. While Antigone was bound by Greek law to obey the king's commands, she was also bound by her sisterly need to see to her brother's eternal rest.

Ismene, Antigone's timid but loving sister, did her best to convince Antigone to obey the law, but Antigone refused to listen. When no one would help her, she visited the battleground alone at night.

The next day, the guards warned King Creon that someone had been interrupted trying to bury Polyneices. That night, the guards caught Antigone trying to dig a grave for Polyneices and brought her to Creon. He ordered the guards away. Since no one else had seen the arrest of his niece, Creon ordered her to go to bed and pretend to be ill. Antigone replied that she would return to the battleground again that night.

Niece and uncle engaged in a classic argument of the individual against authority. At the end of it, Creon had no choice but to arrest the unyielding Antigone and condemn her to death. In her cell, awaiting death, she wrote to Haemon, asking him for forgiveness and wishing him happiness.

Antigone was sealed in a tomb, but then Creon heard his son's cry of despair—from within. Opening the tomb, he found that Antigone had hung herself. Haemon had cut her body down and stabbed himself to death at her side.

Antigone's tragic story has inspired authors through the centuries. In approximately 441 B.C.E., the Greek playwright Sophocles wrote *Antigone*. Another Greek playwright, Euripides, also wrote an *Antigone,* but only fragments of that work have survived. In the twentieth century, the story inspired others, including French playwright and filmmaker Jean Cocteau, whose film titled *Antigone* premiered in 1922. French playwright Jean Anouilh premiered his *Antigone* in 1944, during the German occupation of France. Anouilh's version has a contemporary political slant. The story of Antigone also inspired composers such as Carl Orff, whose opera *Antigone* premiered in 1949.

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Anu

(Hittite)

The Hittite deity Anu started as a cupbearer, became king of the heavens, and finally was sent into exile.

Alalu was the Hittite king in heaven, yet the god Anu was more powerful. After serving as Alalu's cupbearer for nine years, Anu rose up and defeated Alalu, sending him to dwell under the earth. Anu assumed the throne of the Hittite god and took another deity, Kumarbi, as his cupbearer.

After nine years, the cycle repeated, and Kumarbi rebelled. Anu fled in the shape of a bird. Kumarbi caught Anu and bit off and swallowed his phallus, ending Anu's power.

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See also: Alalu/Alalus.

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Anubis/Anpu

(Egyptian)

Before his role was usurped by Osiris, Anubis was the premier Egyptian funerary god who ruled over the dead. Known as He Who Is Upon His Mountain and Lord of the Sacred Land, Anubis protected elaborate cemeteries, preserved the bodies of the dead, and guided souls to the afterlife.

Anubis, "opener of the mouth," was an Egyptian god of the underworld. He usually is portrayed as a jackal or as a man with a jackal's head. This mask, with its movable jaws, may represent him and may have been part of a religious ritual. *(Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY)*

Anubis is represented as a black canine with tall, pointed ears and a bushy tail or as a man with the head of such an animal. The color of Anubis's fur has been interpreted as both the black skin of a rotting corpse and the black mud of fertile farmland.

During the Old Kingdom (c. 2687–2191 B.C.E.), Anubis judged the fate of the deceased, a role eventually taken over by Osiris. In *The Book of the Dead,* a source dating to c. 1600 B.C.E., Anubis attended to the scales in which the hearts of the deceased were weighed against *maat* (truth), while Osiris pronounced judgment. During the mummification process, a priest known as the master of secrets probably wore a mask and played the part of the canine god.

Anubis's background varies considerably in different sources. According to the Greek author Plutarch (c. 46–120 C.E.), Osiris mistook the goddess Nephthys for his wife, Isis, and impregnated her. Their child was Anubis. Isis raised Anubis, the product of this accidental affair, as her own son. Other texts name the cat goddess, Bastet, or a cow goddess as his mother, and later texts identify his father as Osiris, Re, or even Seth.

A peculiar symbol of Anubis is the *imiut* fetish, which, in ancient times, was identified with an earlier god, Imi-ut. This object consists of the stuffed skin of a beheaded animal tied by its tail to a pole, which rests in a pot.

The Greeks and Romans identified Anubis with the god Hermes Psychopompos and also knew him as Hermanubis.

Noreen Doyle

See also: Death; Dogs.

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Anzu

(Sumerian and Babylonian)

The Anzu is a demonic, eagle-like creature that lived in the realm of the gods in Mesopotamian myth. Anzu was born in the rocks of a mountain during a storm that brought forceful winds and flooding waters.

Artists depicted Anzu as a huge bird with outsized, broad wings, sometimes with a lion's head. In the Sumerian Lugalbanda epic, Anzu is pictured with shark's teeth and eagle's claws. In the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh, the horrible-looking, lion-headed monster-bird is described as possessing a maw of fire and the breath of death.

Anzu and Ninurta

The Sumerian poem that is called "Anzu" in modern editions celebrated the valor of the heroic god Ninurta. It tells of Ninurta's rescue of the tablet of destinies from the hands of the wicked Anzu bird. After the introductory description of the god Ninurta as a strong and fierce hero, the poem describes the state of the world immediately after creation: The Tigris and Euphrates rivers existed but did not yet carry water; there were no clouds; the springs did not bear water to the land; the gods had not yet received their assigned positions; and sanctuaries for their worship had not been built.

When Enlil, god of the winds and divine order, first saw Anzu, he was taken aback by his appearance. Ea, the god of wisdom and water, explained to Enlil that Anzu was a product of the flood and that his energies could be harnessed and given direction by employing him as the doorkeeper of Enlil's throne room.

Positioned next to Enlil's seat of authority, Anzu eyed with envy the tablet of destinies, which was one of the objects that invested Enlil with his powers as ruler of gods and men. Control of the tablet gave Enlil the ability to determine the destiny of the world. Anzu stole the tablet, determined to possess the powers of the throne and to command the gods of heaven, and flew with his prize to his inaccessible mountain lair. Frightened of what Anzu might do with the tablet's power, the gods assembled, seeking a warrior to fight the monster and recover the tablet.

Anu asked for a volunteer. When none came forward, three gods were nominated to take up the challenge: Adad, Girra, and Shara. All three refused to encounter Anzu, afraid that they would be turned into clay. The gods became despondent.

Finally, Ea devised a plan. The mistress of the gods, Ninhursag, was called and exalted before the assembly. She was asked to volunteer her firstborn son, Ninurta, to do battle against wicked Anzu and return the seat of authority to its rightful place. Ninurta accepted his mission, and, seething with fury, he set out to confront the thief.

Ninurta and Anzu met on the mountainside, but Anzu, in possession of magical powers conferred on him by the tablet, repelled Ninurta's advance. Ninurta's arrows were turned back. His bow frame vanished, and its wood was turned back into forest trees. The bowstring turned into sheep sinews, and the arrows' feathers became the feathers of newly created birds.

Ninurta's Victory

When word of Anzu's successful defense reached Ea, he encouraged Ninurta not to give up the fight, advising him to be relentless in his attack. Ea told Ninurta that when he observed Anzu beginning to tire from the battle and saw his wings start to droop, Ninurta must cut off the monster's pinion feathers and throw them to the wind. Anzu's magical powers would then wane, and he would instantly call for his feathers to return, at which time Ninurta, newly rearmed with bow and arrows, was to shoot his feathered arrows at the monster. Being feathered, the arrows would be drawn to the target by the monster's own magic.

Ninurta heeded Ea's advice. When Anzu tired, Ninurta cut off his pinion feathers and

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then shot his arrow into the monster. The arrow pierced the monster's heart and lungs. Victorious, Ninurta took hold of the tablet of destinies. Gathered in their assembly, the gods received word of Ninurta's victory. They rejoiced and looked forward to the return of the tablet. But Ninurta hesitated, initially refusing to comply, as possession of the tablet gave him the powers of kingship.

After a break in the text where a section has been lost, the story ends as Ninurta returned to the assembly with the tablet. The gods heaped praise upon him as the valiant conquering hero, the greatest among the gods.

Ira Spar

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Aphrodite

(Greek)

In Greek mythology, Aphrodite is the goddess of love, beauty, and lust.

There are differing accounts of how the goddess Aphrodite came to be. The Greek poet Hesiod wrote that Aphrodite was born out of violence. In the primal days, soon after creation, Uranus, the father of the early gods, was castrated by Cronos, his son. The genitals fell into the ocean, and from that unlikely mating Aphrodite was born, rising up out of the *aphros,* or sea foam. The poet Homer was the first to call her the daughter of Zeus, the chief of the Greek gods, and the mortal woman Dione.

When Zeus realized the beauty of his daughter, he was afraid that the gods would fight over her. He married Aphrodite to the smith god, Hephaestus, since Hephaestus was the calmest and most dependable of the gods. Unfortunately, Hephaestus was also lame and usually covered with soot. Although he crafted his wife beautifully worked jewelry, he could not keep her faithful to him, and Aphrodite had love affairs with many gods and mortals. Among these were the god of war, Ares, and the mortal Adonis, who died tragically when he was gored by a boar.

One of Aphrodite's sons was Eros, who served as her messenger. Eros is better known in the West by his Roman name, Cupid. Aphrodite's Roman name is Venus, and her festival, the Aphrodisiac, was celebrated in various centers of Greece and especially in Athens and Corinth.

There are strong links between Aphrodite and the older goddesses of the ancient Near East, Ishtar, Inanna, and Astarte, who were worshipped in what is now Iraq and Syria. All three of these were goddesses of both love and war, and Aphrodite is the lover of the god of war. The love story of Aphrodite and Adonis is very close to the older Babylonian love story of Ishtar and Tammuz and to the even earlier Sumerian tale of Inanna and Dumuzi, including the hero's death from wounds inflicted by a boar.

See also: Inanna/Ishtar.

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Apollo

(Greek)

In Greek mythology, Apollo was the god of music, poetry, the arts, prophecy, and archery. A god of light, he was also known as Phoebus, which means "radiant" or "beaming," and was sometimes identified with He-

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In this painting, "Apollo and the Muses," by Italian artist Baldassare Peruzzi (1481–1536), the god Apollo is shown in his role as the god of music, dancing with the muses. *(Scala/Art Resource, NY)*

lios, the sun god. As the god of religious healing, Apollo bestowed ritual purification on the guilty.

Like many of the Greek gods, including his sister, Artemis, Apollo had a dark side. He was the god of plague and in that aspect was worshipped as Smintheus, a name that comes from the Greek word *sminthos* (rat). According to the *Iliad,* Apollo shot arrows of plague into the Greek camp during the Trojan War.

Apollo's Origins

Apollo was the son of Zeus and the Titan woman Leto. Zeus's wife, Hera, found out about her husband's infidelity and was furious. So jealous was Hera that she hounded the pregnant Leto from place to place across the earth, finally banning her from staying anywhere on solid ground. The only site where Leto could stop was Delos, which was a floating island and therefore not under Hera's ban. It was on Delos that Leto gave birth to Apollo and his twin sister, the goddess Artemis.

When he was grown, Apollo went to Delphi, where he slew the monstrous serpent Python with his arrows. Python had guarded the sanctuary of Pytho, where a psychic recited prophesies. Apollo, now in charge of the oracle, gained the name Pythian Apollo. He bestowed divine powers on one of the priestesses of the sanctuary, and she became known as the Pythia. The Pythia inhaled the hallucinating vapors issuing from a fissure in the temple floor and then recited her prophesies. A priest translated her murmurings and ravings for those who came in search of help.

Apollo's Trysts

Apollo, just like his father, Zeus, had many love affairs with both goddesses and mortals. One of his early loves was the nymph Cyrene, who bore Apollo a son. This son, Aristaeus, became a demigod protector of cattle who taught humankind the skill of dairy farming.

Another union, this time with a mortal woman, Coronis, daughter of King Phlegyas of the Lapiths, had a more violent outcome. While pregnant by Apollo, Coronis made the mistake of falling in love with a mortal man. When Apollo learned of this, his dark anger was roused. He asked his sister, the huntress Artemis, to kill Coronis. Artemis, just as darkly angry as her brother, did her brother's bidding. Apollo rescued the child from its mother's dead body and brought the boy, called Asclepius, to the good Centaur Cheiron. Asclepius became the god of healing.

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Not all of those whom Apollo pursued wished to be caught. Apollo became infatuated with the nymph Daphne and harried her until she finally could bear it no longer. She asked Peneus, a river god, for help, and he turned Daphne into a laurel tree. Apollo, distraught by what had happened, made the laurel his sacred tree.

Apollo also fell in love with Hyacinthus, a handsome Spartan prince. Zephyrus, the west wind, was jealous, and when Apollo and Hyacinthus were throwing the discus, Zephyrus blew it off course, smashing Hyacinthus's skull. Apollo, grieving, created a flower in his love's honor: the hyacinth.

Yet another love of Apollo's was the boy Cyparissus. As a love gift, Apollo gave him a deer, which the boy adored. When the deer was accidentally slain, Cyparissus wanted to weep forever. Apollo transformed Cyparissus into a tree, the cypress, which became the symbol of sorrow, as the sap on its trunk forms tear-shaped droplets.

Apollo's dark side made him utterly without pity when he was angry. The mortal Niobe made the fatal mistake of boasting to Leto, Apollo's mother, that she had borne fourteen children, which made her superior to Leto, who had only two. This insult to their mother was too much for Apollo and Artemis to ignore. They worked as a merciless hunting team—Apollo killed Niobe's sons and Artemis killed her daughters. Niobe wept so much in her grief that she turned to stone.

Apollo and Troy

Apollo also has a part in the story of Troy, the city that was doomed to fall to the Greeks. He had a love affair with Queen Hecuba, wife of King Priam of Troy, and she bore Apollo a boy, Troilus. It was foretold that Troy could not be defeated if Troilus was allowed to reach the age of twenty. Unfortunately for Troy, the Greek hero Achilles lay in wait for the boy and killed Troilus before he reached that age.

Apollo was not yet finished interfering with the affairs of Troy. He fell in love with Cassandra, Troilus's half sister, and daughter of Hecuba and Priam. Cassandra made a bargain with the god. He could have her as a lover if he taught her the art of prophecy. Apollo agreed. Once she had learned prophecy, however, Cassandra refused him. The angry Apollo could not withdraw his gift but added to it the curse that none of her prophecies would ever be believed. This spelled Troy's doom, since when Cassandra warned of the danger from the Trojan horse, no one believed her.

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Apple Trees

Apple trees are among the world's most valuable fruit trees. Many types are found around the globe, all with beautiful blossoms and bountiful fruit. Apples are even believed to have medicinal properties, which led to the old folk adage "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." It is therefore not surprising to find a large body of myth and folklore surrounding this important tree.

Apple Trees in the Bible and Mythology

In biblical lore, an apple was the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden; however, not every scholar agrees with that. Obviously, there is no way to prove whether or not it was an apple.

In Greek mythology, the earth goddess, Gaea, gave Hera, wife of the chief god, Zeus, a tree of golden apples as a wedding gift. The apples were said to bring both health and beauty. The tree was guarded by a dragon and three virgin sisters, the Hesperides, but Hercules stole the apples as the eleventh of his twelve labors.

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Many people have created myths and stories about apple trees, from beliefs in apple tree spirits to tales of the American folk character Johnny Appleseed. *(Ernest Quost/The Bridgeman Art Library/Getty Images)*

In another Greek myth, Prince Paris of Troy judged a beauty contest between Athena, goddess of knowledge, and Aphrodite, goddess of love. The prize was a golden apple.

In a third Greek myth, the swift young woman warrior Atalanta would marry only the man who could beat her in a race. Hippomenes, who wanted her, distracted Atalanta from the race by tossing three golden apples onto the track.

In Roman mythology, the goddess Pomona was known as the Apple Mother. It was she who watched over the apples that gave immortality. Apples were usually served at the end of Roman banquets as Pomona's blessing was recited.

In Norse mythology, the goddess Iduna guarded the apples that kept the gods young. When she was kidnapped by a giant, the gods began to age until the trickster god Loki—who had gotten the gods into the fix in the first place—was able to win her back again.

British Traditions

Apples also feature prominently in Celtic lore. The fairy folk, the Sidhe, are often portrayed in folktales carrying apple branches that are sometimes poetically described as silver with white blossoms or golden apples. When shaken, they make a sweet melody that banishes pain. There is also a tale of a fairy woman providing the mortal Connla with an apple on which he was able to live for a month.

Apples also feature in Arthurian lore. Avalon, the magical island to which the mortally wounded Arthur was taken, is the island of apples. In fact, some scholars think that the name Avalon comes from the Welsh word for apple, *afal*.

There were many English medieval folk traditions surrounding apples and apple trees, some of which remain. Villagers who wanted to be sure of a good apple harvest would tie cider-soaked pieces of toast on the branches of the largest tree in the orchard. By doing this, they hoped to attract robins, which were the good spirits of the tree. The villagers would then drive away evil spirits with blasts from their shotguns, since such spirits were said to be afraid of noise. The ceremony ended with a ritual pouring of cider over the roots of the tree. This custom is still sometimes performed.

The old custom of celebrating, or wassailing, orchard trees on Christmas Eve still exists in a few corners of England. A farmer and his family go out to the orchard at night with hot cakes and cider. The cakes are placed in the boughs of the best apple trees. A toast is made to the trees in which they are wished good health, and the cider is flung over them. Trees that are bad bearers are not honored.

The living embodiment of the apple tree in Somerset, England, was the Apple Tree Man, who was said to be the spirit of the oldest tree in the orchard. If honored, he would return the favor by keeping the orchard fertile.

See also: Ash Trees; Elf Shot/Elf Arrow; Johnny Appleseed.

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Arabic Storytelling

Arabic storytelling throughout the Middle East and North Africa has a rich, ancient history. The Arab storytelling tradition is considered to be an ancestor of Western frame stories, such as Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

Throughout the countries that make up the Arab world, professional storytellers, called *rawiya* or *rawi,* spend their lives traveling and entertaining audiences in towns, in coffeehouses, at family gatherings, and in nomad tents with folktales, poems, and legends. Other storytellers, called *hakawati,* are more like wandering bards, in that their stories are sung rather than told.

The folktales shared by both types of tellers are familiar in Western cultures as well, especially by those who have read the collection of stories known as *The Thousand and One Nights*. Subject matter covered in traditional Arab tales includes stories of the supernatural beings known as the *djinn,* magic lamps, flying carpets, and wishes fulfilled. World tale types also are represented, such as trickster tales, prince and princess stories, and "master thief" stories that tell of a fellow who can steal the eggs out from under a bird or the gold out of a rich man's purse.

Another important Arabic epic that may be told either in parts or in a single telling is a romance of chivalry entitled *Sirat Antar (The Romance of Antar)*. This work, ascribed to the writer Al Asmai (739–831 C.E.), includes elements of pure fantasy as well as chief events in Arab history before Islam. It is often referred to as the Arab *Iliad*.

One of the oldest forms of Arabic traditional story is the epic poem, but unfortunately none of the oldest story poems remain. There are no written records of Arabic tales prior to the sixth century, when the Syrian alphabet came into use, but many stories have survived through oral tradition. In the eighth century, many of these oral poems were collected by a man known as Hammad the Transmitter. He had committed many poems to memory that were later collected in an anthology called the *Mu'allaqat* or *Collected Odes*.

Poets of Hammad's era were looked upon as wise men or magicians, and they were expected to be able to utter spells or incantations against their foes. Many of the surviving poems follow the rules of nomadic society. A typical poem begins with a reference to forsaken camping grounds. The poet laments and asks his comrades to halt, while he calls up the memory of those who departed in search of other encampments and freshwater springs. Then he usually touches on romance, bewailing the tortures through which his passion puts him. The poet then generally recounts his difficult journeys through the desert and dwells on the lean condition of his steed, which he lauds and describes. The poem concludes with praise for the prince or other major figure in whose presence the poem is recited.

The exotic richness of this literature makes it a fascinating source of inspiration for storytellers.

See also: Djinn/Djinni/Jinn/Genie.

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Arachne

(Greek)

In Greek mythology, Arachne was a young woman, possibly a princess, who was a magnificent weaver. Her boasting brought about her downfall.

Arachne was so great a weaver that the nymphs came to watch. Arachne overheard them saying that only the goddess Athena,

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patron of weavers, could have trained her. At this, Arachne lost her temper and boasted that even Athena could not produce such fine weaving.

Athena heard this and was angered by Arachne's boast. Disguised as an old woman, she went to Arachne and warned her to watch her words. But Arachne announced that she welcomed a chance at a contest of weaving skills against Athena.

With that, Athena dropped her disguise and accepted the challenge. Two looms were set up, and goddess and mortal woman began their work. Athena wove a beautiful scene of the victory of herself over Poseidon for the city that now bore her name, Athens. Arachne wove an equally beautiful scene of the many infidelities of Zeus, leader of the gods and Athena's father. Furious at Arachne for her daring and presumption, Athena ripped the weaving from the loom and willed that Arachne should be overcome with guilt. Arachne, devastated, hung herself.

Athena felt a twinge of guilt and brought Arachne back as the finest of weavers—a spider. The class of animals that includes spiders—arachnids—was named after the unfortunate Arachne.

See also: Athena/Athene.

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Arawn

(Welsh)

Arawn is the king of Annwfn, the pre-Christian Welsh otherworld.

In the first branch, or book, of the *Mabinogion,* a medieval collection of Welsh myths and folklore, Arawn encountered the mortal King Pwyll of Gwenydd as they were both hunting. Arawn transformed himself into a likeness of Pwyll and changed Pwyll into Arawn's likeness. They traded kingdoms for a year so that Pwyll could defeat Arawn's enemy, Hafgan. No explanation is given as to why a mortal man was the only one able to defeat Hafgan.

Pwyll defeated Hafgan, slaying him with a single blow. And although Arawn's wife was beautiful, Pwyll courteously remained chaste while in Arawn's form. Arawn, too, refused to take advantage of Pwyll's wife. Returned to their rightful forms and kingdoms, the two formed a bond of friendship so strong that Pwyll became known as Pwyll Pen Annwfn, or Pwyll, head of Annwfn.

Arawn also appears in the fourth branch of the *Mabinogion* as the giver of Annwfn pigs to Pryderi, son of Pwyll. Arawn also possessed a magic cauldron, decorated with pearls, heated by the breath of nine maidens, and unable to cook the food of a coward. This cauldron is described in "Preiddiau Annwfn" ("The Spoils of Annwfn"), a short Welsh poem of uncertain date, as one of the treasures of Britain that King Arthur attempted to steal.

"Cad Goddeu" ("The Battle of the Trees"), an obscure early poem contained in the thirteenth-century *Book of Taliesin,* refers to a war between Arawn and Amaethon, a plowman. This war began when Amaethon stole a white roebuck, a whelp, and a lapwing from Arawn.

Arawn's realm has sometimes been seen as an underworld, not an otherworld, but there is no evidence linking him to any demonic iconography.

Lisa Spangenberg

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Archetype

An archetype is an image or a figure that is hardwired into every human psyche regardless of culture or race. Examples of

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archetypes include basic character types such as the Wise Old Man or the Trickster.

Swiss psychologist Carl G. Jung (1875–1961) introduced the idea that archetypes are instinctive thought patterns, or innate prototypes of ideas. In Jungian psychology, archetypal imagery is used as a therapeutic tool. In the context of storytelling and mythology, archetypes are unavoidable, universal elements of each story or myth.

Archetypes are easily confused with symbols. When archetypes are reduced to symbols, they become stereotypes. Symbols have a concrete message in that they stand for something specific. The American flag, for example, is a symbol representing the United States of America; gold, given as a reward in fairy tales, symbolizes inner wealth.

Stereotypes are locked into a single view of an image or concept, acting as a stricture that limits interpretation. Tombstones and witches are stereotypical Halloween images; however, when images, associations, and emotions that are normally associated with tombstones or witches are included in these concepts, they can become archetypal terms. The witch archetype might include good witches, evil witches, healers, the three witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth,* witches from *The Wizard of Oz,* innocent women burned as witches, and even a mother or another woman with witchlike qualities.

The hero archetype involves certain behavior—exploration, facing challenges, and independent achievement—as well as images—Samson, Hercules, Abraham Lincoln. Archetypal heroes in fairy tales are an amalgamation of valiant behavior and distinctive character traits. Heroes, for example, are persistent, trust their instincts, and do not expect assistance in return for their efforts from the animals and people they help on their journey. Consequently, heroes succeed.

In literature studies, *archetype* is often used as a synonym for *model* or *prototype.* It derives from the Greek *archee,* which means original. An example of an archetype in this context is the hero in Stephen Crane's novel *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), who is an archetype of a soldier. Philosophers may use the term *archetype* to categorize abstract concepts such as evil or strength.

Ruth Stotter

See also: Jung, Carl Gustav.

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Argonautica

(Greek)

The epic *Argonautica* tells of the adventures of the Greek hero Jason and his companions, the Argonauts. Both the epic and the Argonauts were named for Jason's ship, the *Argo.* There are actually two versions of the epic poem. The first was written by the Greek poet Apollonius of Rhodes in the third century B.C.E. In the first century C.E., the Roman poet Gaius Valerius Flaccus penned another version.

Apollonius was born in 230 B.C.E. Little is known about his life except that he was head of an academy or library as well as a poet. Flaccus lived during the reign of Titus Caesar. Apollonius's version of the *Argonautica* is better known, but Flaccus's work, which he never completed, has unique elements.

The *Argonautica* is the only one of Apollonius's works to have survived. Apollonius used myths and Homer's *Odyssey* as his source material. Apollonius ended the epic before Jason and Medea meet their tragic end.

In Flaccus's version of the story, the gods are portrayed viewing the events as a game, with each god encouraging his or her favorite and working to stop the others. It is Venus, for instance, disguised as Circe, who persuades

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Medea to betray her father and fall in love with Jason. The epic breaks off as Jason and Medea leave Colchis aboard the *Argo,* pursued by the Colchians.

The Quest Begins

The *Argonautica* begins with King Pelias, who was warned that Jason would one day take his throne. Pelias sent Jason out on what he believed to be an impossible voyage: a quest for the mystical Golden Fleece. Jason and fifty heroes, including Hercules and the magical bard Orpheus, set out in the *Argos.*

After many perilous and exotic adventures, they reached the Bosporos. There they found Phineus, once king of Thrace, tormented by harpies. Jason's men drove off the harpies. The grateful Phineus told Jason how to reach the land of King Aietes of Colchis, where he would find the Golden Fleece.

Aietes, who had no intention of giving up the fleece, made Jason pass a test of courage. Jason was to harness the bronze-hoofed bulls on the Plain of Ares and plow the field with them. Aietes instructed Jason to then sow the teeth of a dragon (or giant serpent), from which a crop of warriors would spring up. Jason accepted Aietes's challenge.

Medea

Meanwhile, the gods had smitten Aietes's daughter, the sorceress Medea, with love for Jason. She met him at the shrine of the goddess Hekate and gave him a magical drug to help him in his ordeal. Jason fell in love with Medea and offered to marry her and carry her back to Greece.

At dawn, Jason made a sacrifice to Hekate and then bathed himself and his weapons with the magical drug. He proceeded to harness the fierce bulls, plow the field, and sow the dragon's teeth. But the warriors that grew from the teeth immediately began fighting with one another, so Jason killed them. Even though Jason succeeded in his test, King Aietes plotted to keep the fleece.

Medea, meanwhile, was sure that her father knew she had betrayed him. She rushed to Jason, telling him that she would help him get the Golden Fleece if he saved her. Jason calmed her fears and vowed to marry her. The couple went to the sacred grove, where a dragon guarded the Golden Fleece. Medea put the dragon to sleep, and Jason took the fleece. They fled to the *Argo* and immediately set sail.

King Aietes did know about his daughter's betrayal. The Colchians, led by Medea's brother, Apsyrtos, set sail in pursuit of the *Argo*. Jason and Medea plotted to kill Apsyrtos. They lured him with gifts and slew him. The Colchians retreated.

Jason and Medea, guilty of murder, went to the sorceress Circe to undergo rites to cleanse them of Apsyrtos's blood. Circe refused to help them.

The Journey Continues

The *Argo* sailed on. When they came upon the Sirens, Orpheus's music silenced the treacherous nymphs. The nymph Thetis and the Nereids brought the ship safely past the twin perils of Scylla and Charybdis.

Jason and Medea arrived at what is now the island of Corfu, where they were confronted by the Colchians. The Colchians insisted that unless Medea was Jason's wife, she must return with them to her homeland. Jason and Medea were married that night, and the Colchians let them go.

When the *Argo* reached Crete, Jason and Medea were attacked by the guardian of Crete, Talos. This gigantic man of bronze, created by the smith god, Hephaestus, tirelessly circled the island, throwing stones at any approaching ships. But Medea knew how to destroy him. Talos had a single vein, from his neck to his ankle, which was closed by a single bronze nail. Medea enchanted Talos and removed the bronze nail, causing his blood to run out and killing him.

After this last adventure, the *Argo* returned to Greece, at which point the epic ends.

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See also: Epics.

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Arianrhod

(Welsh)

In pre-Christian mythology, Arianrhod was the niece of Math of Mathonwy, ruler of the kingdom of Gwynnedd. Her brother was Gwydion, the heroic magician. Some mythologists theorize that Arianrhod was originally a deity, rather than a mythologized historical figure.

Arianrhod's story appears in "Math, Son of Mathonwy," the fourth branch of the *Mabinogion,* a medieval Welsh collection of mythology and folklore. Arianrhod was chosen as one of Math's footholders, a virgin who kept the magical king's feet from touching the ground. But Arianrhod failed the virginity test when she stepped over Math's magic wand, or rod, and instantly bore a son. As soon as the baby boy uttered its first cry, Arianrhod fled, embarrassed or horrified. As she ran away, something small fell from her. Gwydion took up the small object, wrapped it in silk, and hid it in a small chest.

Math, meanwhile, had the infant boy baptized at the sea's edge, giving him the name Dylan, which means Son of the Waves. As soon as the boy was touched by the sea, he leaped into the water and swam off, clearly a child of the sea people.

The object that Gwydion had placed in the chest was a second fetus that grew in this magical incubator into a fine boy. Arianrhod refused to name this second son or to provide him with weapons, but Gwydion tricked her into arming the boy and giving him the name Lleu Llaw Gyffes (Lleu of the Sure Hand).

According to folklore, a reef off the coast of Gwynnedd is called Caer Arianrhod (Arianrhod Castle). The lore claims that it is all that remains of the castle where Arianrhod was tricked into giving Lleu Llaw Gyffes the weapons. Caer Arianrhod is also an alternate name for the constellation Corona Borealis. Mythologists consider this to be evidence that Arianrhod may have been a deity, as many constellations were named after deities.

Lisa Spangenberg

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Armageddon

(Judeo-Christian)

In biblical lore, Armageddon is said to be the name of the final battle on Earth between the forces of good and evil. In the New Testament, it is also the battlefield described in Revelation 16:16 as the scene where the kings of the earth, the forces of good and evil, were to assemble for battle on the day of divine judgment.

However, the only mention in the Bible of Armageddon is ambiguous: "And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." It does not say clearly whether or not any event actually is to take place there or whether the gathering of armies is to be seen only as a warning sign. The assumption that there will be a final battle at that sight may belong more to biblical lore than to fact. Like the Norse Ragnarok, Armageddon ended with the destruction of the world and the creation of a finer paradise.

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Megiddo was a mighty, fortified Canaanite city in the first millennium B.C.E. In the New Testament Book of Revelations, Megiddo is said to be the site of the final battle of Armageddon. *(Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)*

The name *Armageddon* probably derives from Mount Megiddo (*Har-Megiddo* in Hebrew), located in present-day Israel. The ancient city-state of Megiddo occupied a strategic site on the trade route connecting Egypt with Mesopotamia. Many battles were fought on the plain of Megiddo between the Israelites and their enemies, and the location is mentioned in the Old Testament, in Judges 5:19.

Megiddo was also the site of a ferocious battle between Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses II and the Hittites in 1469 B.C.E. Although Ramses claimed victory, the battle ended without a clear-cut winner and resulted in the signing of what was probably the world's first peace treaty.

Today, the word *Armageddon* is often used to mean any sort of grand catastrophe, manmade or natural.

See also: Death.

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Asbjørnsen, Peter Christen

(1812–1885)

Peter Christen Asbjørnsen was a folklorist and naturalist known for his collections of regional folklore.

Asbjørnsen was born on January 15, 1812, in Christiana, Norway, which is now Oslo. One of his closest friends was the poet Jørgen Moe, who was born on April 22, 1813. Moe and Asbjørnsen first met as teenagers in school.

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It was with Moe that Asbjørnsen began to collect the folktales of Norway. They traveled around Norway and spoke to old storytellers. Their first collection of tales, *Nor,* was published in 1837. The two men published their major collection as a four-volume work titled *Norske folkeeventyr (Norwegian Folk Stories)* between 1841 and 1844. The work was translated into other languages and was quickly praised in Norway and throughout Europe for its contribution to the world's folklore and literature.

Moe went on to become one of the finest Norwegian romantic poets, publishing *Digte,* a major collection of his work, in 1850. He also published a children's book in 1851 that became a classic in Norway, *I broden og i tjaernet (In the Well and the Pond).*

While Moe worked on his poetry, Asbjørnsen continued his interest in Norway's folklore. In 1845, he published the first in a series of *Norwegian Fairy Stories and Folk Legends.* In addition to his work as a folklorist, Asbjørnsen was also a forester and wrote numerous scholarly papers on the natural sciences.

Moe died in Norway on March 27, 1882. Asbjørnsen passed away on January 5, 1885.

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Asgard

(Norse)

In Norse mythology, Asgard was one of the nine realms of existence. It was the highest realm in the Norse mythic universe and the homeland of the Aesir, the race of warrior gods who were the dominant deities. The chief god was Odin.

Asgard was surrounded by a high stone wall that had been built by a stonemason called Blast. The vast plain of Idavoll was located at the center of Asgard. This was the site of the inner hall of Gladsheim (Place of Joy), where the Aesir gods met in council.

The hall of the goddesses, called Vingolf, was also within the walls of Asgard. Odin's castle was the mighty Valhalla. This great hall was where slain mortal heroes were brought to continue training and to wait for the coming of Ragnarok, the final battle, when they would fight on Odin's side against the foe.

Bifrost was a rainbow bridge that linked Midgard, the realm of humans, with the gate of Asgard. It was made with magic and great skill by the Aesir and would stand until Ragnarok, when it was foretold that this rainbow bridge would collapse.

At the entrance of Bifrost stood the god Heimdall, the guardian of Asgard. Heimdall's hearing was so keen that he was able to hear grass growing on the mortal earth or wool growing on the back of a mortal sheep. Heimdall also could see for a hundred miles.

The realms of Vanaheim and Alfheim also were found at this highest level of existence. Vanaheim was home to the Vanir, the secondary race of gods, many of whom intermarried with the Aesir. Alfheim was the domain of the *lios alfar,* the elf folk of light. The god Frey, said to be the father of the *lios alfar,* lived at Alfheim. Originally one of the Vanir, Frey was adopted into the Aesir pantheon and had his palace in Alfheim.

See also: Heimdall/Heimdallr; Norse Mythology; Valhalla.

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Ash Trees

(Western European)

The ash tree, particularly the type that is common to Western Europe, is found throughout world mythology, specifically in Norse and Celtic myths and folk beliefs.

The word *ash* is believed to derive from a poetic Anglo-Saxon word, *asec,* which means spear, or from the Norse name for tree, *ask*. Alternately, it may derive from the Middle English asshe, from Old English æasc.

Since ash is a hard, strong, but flexible wood, it was often used by the Norse, the Celts, and the Anglo-Saxons to make weapons, such as spears and axe handles. In Norse mythology, the spears of the gods Odin and Thor were said to have been made of ash wood. In the early twentieth century, the wood of the ash tree was used in aircraft wings.

The ash tree—like many trees—is the center of several folk beliefs. This pencil-and-watercolor picture of an ash tree is by English artist John Constable (1776–1837). *(Victoria & Albert Museum, London/Art Resource, NY)*

Both the Norse and the Celts shared a belief that the ash tree was protective. The mightiest of these in Norse mythology was Yggdrasil, the World Tree, a giant ash with roots in the lower realm, a trunk in the mortal realm, and leaves in the realm of the gods. The Irish Celts believed that three of the five legendary guardian trees of Ireland were ash. The ash tree was one type of tree found growing beside Irish holy wells, and it also was believed to keep springs pure. The ash was also known in both Norse and Celtic beliefs as a tree of healing and of rebirth.

In current folk beliefs of Europe and North America, the leaves of the ash tree are said to ward off evil witchcraft and to bring good luck. Ash sap is said to protect newborn babies and make them strong. Until fairly recently, newborns in Britain were often given a teaspoon of ash sap to drink. It was also British tradition to pass a sickly child through a cleft made in an ash tree in order to heal the child. The cleft was then bound up again, and as the tree healed, so would the child.

See also: Apple Trees; Elm Trees.

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Athena/Athene

(Greek)

In Greek mythology, Athena, called Minerva by the Romans, was the goddess of

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This statue of Athena, found near Varvakeion in Greece, portrays the goddess of wisdom in all her finery. Athena carries a shield, as she is also a patroness of heroes. This work is currently part of the Acropolis Museum collection. *(Scala/Art Resource, NY)*

warfare, wisdom, and arts and crafts. She was also the patron goddess of Athens and the favorite child of her father, Zeus, chief of the Greek gods.

Athena's mother was Metis, the goddess of wisdom and Zeus's first wife. Zeus grew fearful that Metis would give birth to a son mightier than himself, so he swallowed Metis.

While Metis was within Zeus, she, or possibly Athena, began to make a helmet and robe for Athena. The noise of the helmet being hammered into shape gave Zeus terrible headaches. He called to his son the smith Hephaestus for help. Hephaestus split open Zeus's skull, and from it emerged the full-grown Athena, wearing her newly fashioned robe and helmet.

Athena assisted certain Greek heroes, including Perseus and Odysseus, and the half-divine Hercules. But Athena could be vengeful if crossed. As the goddess of arts and crafts, Athena was skilled at weaving, embroidery, and spinning. When a mortal woman named Arachne boastfully challenged Athena at weaving, following their contest, Athena turned Arachne into a spider.

Athena and the god Poseidon, king of the seas and brother of Zeus, both wanted to claim a certain Greek city. They agreed that whichever gave the city the finest gift would be the one to claim it. Poseidon struck the side of the cliff with his trident and a spring welled up. Athena's gift was an olive tree. The people chose hers as the better gift, since it provided food, oil, and wood. Athena named her city Athens.

Athena is usually pictured as a tall, regal woman wearing a crested helmet and carrying a spear and shield. On her shield is the head of Medusa. Athena is often shown with an owl, her patron animal, on her shoulder.

She is often called Athena Parthenos, meaning "virgin," because she chose to stay a virgin. The Parthenon, the Athenian temple dating to about 400 B.C.E., is dedicated to her.

See also: Zeus.

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Atlas

(Greek)

In Greek mythology, Atlas was the son of the Titan Iapetus and the nymph Clymene.

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Unlike his brothers, Prometheus and Epimetheus, Atlas fought with the other Titans, supporting Cronos against Zeus and leading them in battle. As a result, he was singled out by Zeus for special punishment and made to support the world on his back.

Atlas was temporarily relieved of this burden by the hero Hercules, who needed the Titan's help in getting the golden apples of the Hesperides. Hercules then tricked Atlas into taking up his burden again.

See also: Giants; Upelluri/Ubelluris; Ymir.

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Atum

(Egyptian)

The Egyptian god Atum, whose name means "completed one," was the creator of everything, including himself. He was the chief deity of the ancient Egyptian city Heliopolis.

Atum created the god Shu and the goddess Tefnut, from whom rose Geb (earth) and Nut (sky). Shu and Tefnut were lost for a time in the primordial waters (Nun). When they returned to Atum, the god wept tears of joy, from which sprang humankind.

Artists typically represent Atum as a king, wearing the double crown of Egypt and a false beard (see illustration on page 42). He is also known as "lord of the two lands," a reference to Upper and Lower Egypt. At various points in Egyptian history, different animals were associated with Atum, including apes, scarabs, ichneumon (a kind of mongoose), fish, and nonvenomous snakes.

Atum has been combined with a number of gods, particularly the sun god Re. These two are sometimes encountered as a single god, called Re-Atum. At other times, Atum is associated specifically with the setting sun, counterbalancing Re as the rising sun.

Noreen Doyle

See also: Aiomum Kondi; Amun/Amen/Amon/Amun-Re; An/Anu; Wele.

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Aucassin and Nicolette

(Medieval European)

The popular medieval romance of Aucassin and Nicolette was created by an anonymous thirteenth-century troubadour. Written in prose, the story may have been acted out as well as recited. What makes the work interesting for storytellers and modern audiences is its feminist slant.

The tale begins with Count Bougar of Valence waging war on Count Garin of Beauclaire. Count Garin's son Aucassin was in love with Nicolette, goddaughter of Count Bougar. Nicolette was a slave bought by Count Bougar from the Saracens and converted to Christianity. Count Bougar had planned to wed her to a wealthy man, but Aucassin's father refused to let his son marry a former slave. Count Garin, dismayed by his son's insistence, plotted to kill Nicolette. To protect her, Count Bougar sealed her up in a tall tower.

Aucassin was willing to fight his father's war if it meant he would see Nicolette again. His father agreed to the deal, but the boy was captured in battle. Aucassin managed to escape and captured Count Bougar. But Count Garin reneged on his deal. Instead of allowing Aucassin to see Nicolette, he cast his son into prison.

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This stele, or carved commemorative stone, of Lady Taperet may date to Egypt's Twenty-second Dynasty. The detail, which depicts the lady adoring the god Atum (see page 41), is painted on wood. *(Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)*

Meanwhile, Nicolette had escaped from her lonely tower and had hidden in the forest. She bribed peasants to get word to Aucassin about where to find her. She believed that if Aucassin was unable to find her in the flowery bower she had built for herself, he was not worthy of her.

When Count Garin learned that Nicolette was gone, he released his son. Aucassin promptly ran off to find Nicolette, and the couple was reunited.

Now the two young people were forced to run for their lives. They set sail for the kingdom of Torelore. Upon their arrival, they discovered that the king was sick in bed and the queen had been forced to lead the army. Aucassin set things to right, but the king found Aucassin too violent and tried to deport him.

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The king also wanted to keep Nicolette for himself.

Pirates attacked the harbor. Aucassin was carried off on one ship and Nicolette on another. Aucassin wound up back in Beauclaire, where he learned that his father had died and that he was the new ruler.

Nicolette went to Carthage, where she learned that she was actually the daughter of the king of Carthage. Nicolette's father planned to marry her to a pagan ruler, but Nicolette ran off to Beauclaire in disguise.

Aucassin and Nicolette were reunited once again, and the story ended happily.

See also: Romance.

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Avalon

(Celtic)

In Arthurian legend, Avalon is a mythical place of magic, a location variously described as an island or a valley in Britain. Occasionally, it is simply the home territory of one of Arthur's nobles. More often, it is an otherworld, a place associated with the supernatural.

Avalon is Arthur's destination after he is wounded in his last great battle. It is also the destination of the Holy Grail, carried westward by the family of Joseph of Arimathea. The island called Avalon is the residence of supernatural women, from Morgan le Fay to the fairy mistress of the knight Lanval.

Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace

Geoffrey of Monmouth, who may have been a secular canon, a member of the Christian clergy who did not reside in a monastery, lived in Oxford, England. Sometime around 1130 C.E., he completed his work *The History of the Kings of Britain,* which related the ancient history of the Britons. While much of what Geoffrey wrote is inaccurate or unverifiable, his work has had a permanent effect on Western storytelling.

In Geoffrey's time, the Welsh and others still told the legends of Arthur, a leader who may have lived in the fifth or sixth century. Someday, it was said, Arthur would return to lead the Britons again. Geoffrey took the shadowy figure of Arthur and created from it a hero of enduring international fame, linked to an otherworldly Avalon. According to Geoffrey, there was more than one connection between Arthur and Avalon. Arthur's famous sword, Excalibur, had been forged there. After his final battle, King Arthur was carried to Avalon for treatment of his mortal wounds.

In another work, *Vita Merlini (Life of Merlin),* Geoffrey gave further details: Avalon was an island of apples, a place where, without cultivation, the land produced fruit and grain. A woman named Morgen ruled there, the wisest and most beautiful of nine sisters. She had the ability to fly and was said to have instructed her sisters in mathematics. She promised Arthur's companions that if the king remained on the island with her, he would recover through her healing arts.

In 1155, Wace, an Anglo-Norman clerk, finished his work *Roman de Brut,* a history of Britain written in verse that was based on Geoffrey's work. Wace restated that Arthur's sword was made in Avalun or Avarun; that his last battle took place in Cornwall, an area near Somerset; and that it was to Avalon that Arthur was taken when mortally wounded. Wace mentioned the legend of Arthur's possible survival but otherwise stripped the supernatural from these stories.

Chrétien de Troyes

In the decades between 1170 and 1190, Chrétien de Troyes translated the Arthurian tales into Old French and incorporated twelfth-century

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courtly culture in his first Arthurian romance, *Erec and Enide*. The magical Avalon and other unearthly places were still central to the stories.

In *Erec and Enide,* Guingamar, lord of the Isle of Avalon, attended Erec and Enide's wedding. Although he played no active role, Lord Guingamar was said to be a friend of Morgan le Fay's, whose healing powers were mentioned much later in the story. At the wedding feast, it was revealed that Morgan le Fay was Arthur's sister.

Marie de France

Avalon is mentioned again in an Arthurian story written by twelfth-century author Marie de France. The story of Lanval told of a young knight who was overlooked in Arthur's granting of wives and land. While meditating on his unfortunate situation, Lanval encountered a maiden who offered him her love. She was a fairy mistress, able to supply him with inexhaustible riches. Ultimately, the maiden took the knight away to the beautiful island of Avalon, and he was not heard from again.

The myth of Avalon has endured to modern times and has appeared in novels, such as Marion Zimmer Bradley's 1979 best-seller *The Mists of Avalon*; movies, such as the 1990 *Avalon,* in which the mythical site is used as a metaphor for the American Dream; and even a late-twentieth-century role-playing game called Avalon.

See also: King Arthur; Morgan le Fay.

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Aztec Mythology

The Aztec empire dominated central and southern Mexico from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. The Aztecs' complex pantheon included multiple incarnations of several deities. The ancient Aztecs believed that continual human sacrifice was necessary in order for the universe to function and for the gods to survive.

The pantheon of the Aztecs can be daunting to the modern reader. The following information is a starting point for further research into this fascinating mythology.

Deities

Coatlicue, or "serpent skirt," was both an Earth mother and a monster. She was the goddess of fertility and death, the mother of the gods and of the stars of the southern sky. She was the all-giving and all-devouring mother who was both the womb and the tomb. Coatlicue was portrayed as a woman with clawed hands and feet, a skirt of snakes, and a necklace of human hearts. Coatlicue became pregnant when she stuffed a ball of feathers that had fallen from the sky in her bosom. Her outraged children sought to slay her, but the god Huitzilopochtli emerged fully armed from his mother's womb and slew many of his brothers and sisters.

Huitzilopochtli then became the fierce god of war and the principal god of the Aztecs. Sacrifices to him were made daily, in echo of the story of his slaying his brothers and sisters, and to reflect the endless battle between day and night.

Coyolxauhqui, or "golden bells," was the sister of Huitzilopochtli. She led the rebellious attempt to slay Coatlicue. In the battle, Huitzilopochtli cut off Coyolxauhqui's head and tossed it into the sky, and it became the Moon. Coyolxauhqui was then known as the Moon goddess.

Other deities filled various vital roles in the Aztec religion. One of these was Chicomecoatl, the maize goddess, the female aspect of

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corn and nourishment. Each year, a young girl was sacrificed to her by decapitation. This may have symbolized the cutting down of the corn stalk. The sacrifice's blood was then poured over a statue of the goddess, possibly symbolizing life and life-giving moisture in one. The corpse was then flayed, and the skin worn by a priest, possibly symbolizing the corn's rebirth.

Tlaloc was the god of rain and agriculture. He took the souls of those killed by water, lightning, or contagious disease. When he became angry at humans, he would use lightning to bring disease. Some accounts say that he had four types of water at his command. The first type was life-giving, the second brought blight to plants, the third brought frost, and the fourth could destroy all. Victims were sacrificed to Tlaloc by drowning. Tlaloc actually predates the Aztecs and probably came from the Toltecs, a people who ruled Mexico before the coming of the Aztecs.

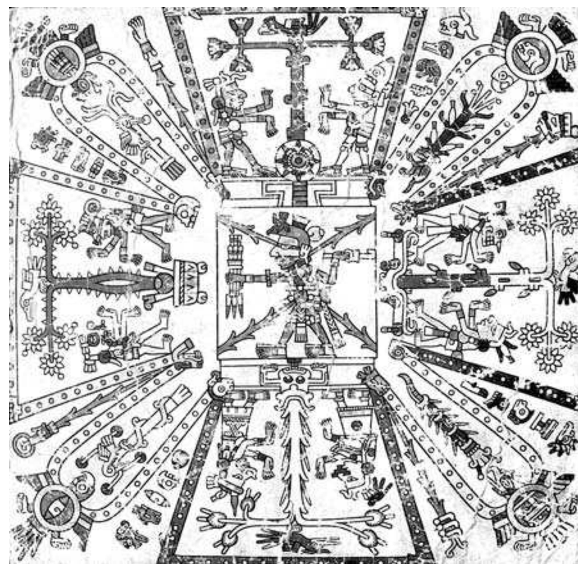
Tlaloc's wife was Chalchiuhtlicue, the goddess of lakes and streams and of youthful beauty and passion. She ruled all the waters. In the days of creation, she was the one who brought a flood to destroy the wicked fourth world, the world that came before this one.

Another husband-and-wife team of deities was Mictlantecuhtli, the god of death, who ruled over Mictlan and guarded the bones of the dead, and his wife, Mictecacihuatl, the goddess of death, who helped him rule and protect the bones of the dead.

Chantico, or "she who dwells in the house," was the Aztec goddess of hearth fires and volcanic fires, as well as the protector of precious items. When she violated the ban on eating paprika on fasting day by eating roasted fish with paprika, Chantico was turned into a dog. In the Aztec religion, even the deities were punished for violating taboos.

Tlazolteotl, "the eater of filth," was the goddess of both sex and purification. On hearing a dying man's confession, Tlazolteotl cleansed the man's soul by eating his sins, or his moral filth.

Ueuecoyotl, or "old, old coyote," was the god of wildness and irresponsible sex and gaiety. He may be the same trickster figure as



In Aztec mythology, the gods need blood in order for the universe to function. This page from the Aztec codex, made with lime wash applied on beaten deerskin, shows part of a creation myth. The fire god at the center of the universe is being fed the blood of sacrifice from the god Tezcatlipoca. *(Werner Forman/ Art Resource, NY)*

Coyote or Old Man Coyote known to indigenous peoples of the American Southwest.

Xochipilli, or "flower prince," was also known as Macuilzochitl, or "five flowers." He was the god of flowers, games, and beauty, as well as love, dance, and music. It is possible that Xochipilli was also the god of hallucinogenic plants and their use.

Ehecatl, the god of the winds, brought life to all and, since he fell in love with a mortal woman, love to humankind.

Quetzalcoatl, "the feathered serpent," was the deity who created humanity and gave the people various gifts, including the calendar and maize. Rituals worshipping Quetzalcoatl were among the few that did not involve human sacrifice. Quetzalcoatl's brother was Xolotl, the god of lightning and lord of the evening star, Venus. Xolotl guided the dead safely to Mictlan. He was portrayed variously as a dog-headed man, a skeleton, or even as a dog companion.

Perhaps the most mysterious of the deities was Ometeotl (Ometecuhtli, male, and Omecihuatl, female), the androgynous creator god. The highest god of the Aztec pantheon,

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Ometeotl was the ruler of duality and opposites united. This deity had no formal worship, but was said to be present in all things.

Sacred Places

Aztlan was the mythical site out of which the Aztec people were believed to have emerged. This is contrary to archaeological evidence, which shows that they traveled down through North America to settle in Mexico.

Mictlan was the underworld, where every soul descended to find rest. To reach the underworld safely, the souls of the dead needed magical powers and were guided by the god Xolotl after wandering for four years beneath the earth.

Tlillan-Tlapallant was the middle of the three Aztec heavens, reserved for those who shared in the wisdom of Quetzalcoatl.

Talocan was the heavenly realm of the gods, uppermost of the three heavens.

Monsters

Ahuizotl was a half-human, half-monkey creature bearing a hand at the end of its tail. It lived near water, ate humans, and used its extra hand to catch prey.

Cipactli was a primordial sea monster, a fishlike crocodile, from whose body the gods created the earth. The god Tezcatlipoca sacrificed his foot to the creature in a mythic parallel to the Norse god Tyr sacrificing his hand to the monstrous wolf Fenrir.

Tzizimimet, or "the monsters descending from above," were malevolent stellar beings.

Aztec mythology may seem particularly alien to many readers, but it is a rich mine for intrepid storytellers and an intriguing look into one culture's attempts to make sense of the world.

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Baba Yaga

(Russian)

Baba Yaga is a hag from Russian folklore. There was more than one Baba Yaga, and the term is sometimes used to refer to a character type that is either a fearful crone or a wise old woman.

The specific folklore character called Baba Yaga was a bony, seemingly ancient woman with iron teeth and an abnormally long nose. She also was called Baba Yaga Kostianaya Noga, or Baba Yaga Bony Legs, because of her thinness and endless hunger, often for human flesh. Baba Yaga rode in a large mortar, pushing it along with a pestle on the ground and in the air. She swept away all traces of her travels with a birch-wood broom.

Baba Yaga lived in a hut deep within the dense forest. The hut stood upon giant chicken legs and rotated. This rotation kept visitors out until Baba Yaga ordered the hut to stand still. Surrounding the hut was a circle of stakes, and each stake was topped by a human skull. Baba Yaga ate unwanted guests and displayed these souvenirs to warn others to stay away.

Visitors were asked whether they had come of their own free will or had been sent. Anyone fearful or honest enough to admit being sent was eaten; however, Baba Yaga seemed to admire the bold and did not harm the pure of heart. Baba Yaga sometimes gave advice and magical gifts to those who were wise enough to be polite to her or, perversely, to those who dominated her.

The Russian folktale "Vasilissa the Beautiful" hints that originally Baba Yaga may have been a divine or semidivine figure that ruled over the elements. In that tale, Vasilissa saw three strange figures, the white horseman, the red horseman, and the black horseman. All three seemed to serve Baba Yaga. In that same tale, Baba Yaga was served by three magical pairs of hands that she called "My soul friends."

There are other clues in the folklore that Baba Yaga was once considered a demigod of nature. But much of pagan Russian mythology has been lost, so it is impossible to prove that she was ever anything more than a folkloric witch.

See also: Hags; Slavic Mythology.

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Baby Cast Adrift

The folkloric and mythic theme of the baby cast adrift is familiar around the world. The most familiar example of the theme may be the story of Moses in the Old Testament.

Moses

In the Bible story of Moses, an unnamed pharaoh (possibly the historical Seti I or his more famous son, Ramses II) saw that the Hebrews were growing too numerous for his comfort. He ordered that all male infants be slain. To save her son, Moses's mother put the infant in a woven basket and placed it in the bulrushes in the Nile River.

The pharaoh's daughter found the baby and raised him as her own. When Moses was grown, he discovered his true identity and became the leader of the Hebrew people.

Sargon

King Sargon of Akkad, in what is now Iraq, was a historical figure who reigned from approximately 2334 to 2279 B.C.E. The folklore that was generated about him, which may have been inspired by court propaganda, claimed that Sargon came from humble origins. It said that his mother was a temple priestess who was forced to give up her baby.

A gardener found the infant Sargon floating in a basket on the river, and he raised the boy as his son. When Sargon was a young man, the goddess Inanna saw him and put the desire for greatness into his heart.

Romulus and Remus

The two mythic founders of Rome were twin brothers born to the vestal virgin Rhea Silvia and the war god, Mars. Their mother was condemned to death for breaking her vow of chastity. Before she died, she put Romulus and Remus into a basket and set them adrift on the Tiber River.

The brothers were rescued by a she-wolf. The wolf nursed the boys until a shepherd found them and raised the boys as his own.

Taliesin

In Welsh Celtic lore, the poet Taliesin (Shining Brow) had mythic origins. As a boy he was called Gwion, and he challenged the perilous Ceridwen, a powerful sorceress.

Ceridwen and Gwion engaged in a shape-shifting duel. The sorceress finally swallowed the boy when he took the shape of a seed, only to find herself with child. The baby was Gwion. Ceridwen resolved to kill him. She sewed him in a watertight bag and set him adrift on the ocean.

Gwion was rescued by Elphin, son of a Welsh lord. He took the new name of Taliesin.

World Folklore

In a tale from Poland, twin babies were cast adrift by the jealous sisters of a queen. A similar tale originated in Turkey.

A tale from what is now the Czech Republic features a king who was terrified by a prophecy that told of a baby who would grow up and take his throne. The king cast the baby adrift. Unfortunately for the king, the baby survived, and the prophecy was fulfilled.

Superman and Other Modern Equivalents

The story of the comic-book hero Superman is one of the most familiar tales using this theme. When he was an infant, his parents placed him in a small spacecraft to save him from his planet's destruction. He was set adrift in the sea of space and eventually landed on Earth, where he was raised by humans as Clark Kent.

Another example appears in the 1988 film *Willow,* in which a baby heir to the throne is rescued from a basket that was set adrift in a river.

The baby cast adrift is truly a universal theme.

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See also: Culture Heroes; Tale Types.

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Baku

(Japanese)

People of every culture suffer from nightmares and have come up with folk beliefs to deal with these terrifying dreams. The Japanese created the *baku,* or dream eaters.

The baku are good spirits that can resemble a combination of many animals. A baku might, for example, have the head of an elephant and the body of a lion, or the head of a lion and the body of a horse. It might have tiger legs or a cow's tail. It might even look like a very pink pig. There does not seem to be any hard and fast rule about a baku's appearance.

Whatever their appearance might be, from the weird to the almost comical, all baku play the same role: They help people by eating the evil spirits that cause nightmares. A baku may have to be summoned by the dreamer, or it may simply decide to appear on its own.

Sometimes, a baku may decide to turn the bad dream into a good one. Occasionally an overzealous baku might eat all dreams, both good and bad, or may keep a person from sleeping to avoid nightmares. But for the most part, baku are helpful to humans.

Someone who has had a nightmare may protect himself from further bad dreams by calling out, "Baku, eat my dreams." The same words may be hung on a wall or embroidered on a pillow.

Today, there are baku plush dolls and toys, and the symbol for baku still may be found printed or embroidered on pillowcases. The baku are also characters in modern Japanese anime and manga (forms of animation and cartoons). There is a baku-type character among the creatures of the Pokémon franchise.

See also: Nightmares.

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Balder

(Norse)

In Norse mythology, Balder is one of the Aesir, the principal race of gods. He is the son of the chief gods Odin and Frigga.

Balder was said to have been a beautiful god, with fair hair and white skin. He was the god of innocence, beauty, joy, purity, and peace. In the centuries before Christianity reached Scandinavia, he may have had a more warlike nature and may even have been a battle god. By the time Icelandic poet Snorri Sturluson wrote the poetic *Edda* in the thirteenth century, however, Christianity had come to Scandinavia, and Balder had taken on Christlike attributes.

Little is actually known about Balder except for the famous story about his death. Either Balder or his mother dreamed of his death, and so Frigga made everything on Earth vow never to hurt him. She forgot only the humble mistletoe.

When the wicked Loki learned of Frigga's omission, he took a sharpened sprig of mistletoe and hurried to the place where Balder was playing with the gods. They were hurling objects at him that bounced off without harming him. Loki gave the mistletoe to Balder's brother, the blind god Höd, who then inadvertently killed his brother with it.

Hel, goddess of the underworld, promised to release Balder from the underworld if all

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objects alive and dead would weep for him. Everything wept, except the giantess Thokk, who refused to mourn the slain god. And so Balder remained in the underworld and would not emerge until after Ragnarok, the battle at the end of the world. At Ragnarok, Balder and his brother Höd would be reconciled and rule the new world together with Thor's sons.

When the gods discovered that the giantess Thokk had been Loki in disguise, they hunted him down and bound him to three rocks. They tied a serpent above him, and its venom dripped onto Loki's face. His wife, Sigyn, protected Loki by gathering the venom in a bowl. From time to time, she had to turn away to empty the bowl, and the poison would drip onto Loki, who writhed in pain. Loki's struggling was said to cause earthquakes.

The myth ends saying that Loki would be freed in time to fight against the Aesir at Ragnarok.

See also: Hel; Norse Mythology; Odin/Odhinn.

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Balinese Mythology

The mythology of the Indonesian island of Bali is a mixture of Balinese Hinduism and earlier animistic traditions. It also has been influenced by recent Islamic folklore. The early, pre-Hindu traditions of Bali are covered in this article.

Creation

In the beginning, there was only the world snake, Antaboga. The thoughts of the great snake created Bedwang, the turtle that is the world. There were several layers of existence, including the underworld, the seas, and a series of skies. Above these lies the heaven of the ancestors, and beyond that is the heaven of the gods.

Barong, the lion-like king of the good spirits, was an enemy of the demon-queen Rangda. This mask, inspired by Balinese mythology, was made in the twentieth century. *(Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY)*

Deities

The main Balinese deities include Antaboga; Batara Kala, the god who created light and Earth and rules the underworld with the goddess Setesuyara; and Bedwang, the world turtle. During the ten-day holiday of Galungan, it is believed that the gods visit Earth.

Supernatural Beings

Among the many supernatural beings of Balinese belief are the Awan. These are snakes that appear as falling stars. Barong, a lion figure, is the king of the good spirits and the enemy of the demon-queen Rangda. Rangda is a terrifying being who devours children.

The Leyak is a ghoulish man who seems to be an ordinary human by day. But at night he steals the entrails of corpses—or even the living—and makes a potion from them that

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allows him to change shape. Tjak is a bird with a human face.

Yudisthira

Yudisthira was a kindhearted human who did good deeds for everyone. When he and his dog died, they started up the long road to heaven together. At the entrance to heaven, the souls of the newly dead waited for admittance. There was a chair available that Yudisthira could rest on, but he wanted a chair for his dog so it could rest, too. Everyone raged at Yudisthira for caring about a mere dog.

Suddenly the dog turned into a deity and explained that he had only pretended to be a dog to see if Yudisthira was good to all living things. Yudisthira had passed the test and was admitted to heaven.

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Ballads

Ballads are songs that tell a story. Many cultures have a heritage of narrative songs, but when scholars and singers in English-speaking countries use the term *ballad,* they are usually referring to a specific body of narrative songs that originated in the British Isles.

These ballads were commonly sung from the fifteenth through the early twentieth centuries and were passed down through oral transmission, evolving over time into many different versions. They have survived because the stories they tell deal with universal themes and the melodies that accompany them have emotional appeal.

Classic Ballads and Broadsides

There are two basic types of ballads, the first of which is the classic ballads. The body of classic British ballads consists mainly of songs written and sung from the 1500s at the earliest, with many of them originating in the 1700s and early 1800s. These classic ballads are often known as Child ballads because they were collected from manuscript sources by Professor Francis James Child of Harvard University in the 1880s.

In this collection, published as a five-volume work titled *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads,* Child grouped all the texts together into what he considered the 305 basic narrative songs of the British tradition. For each ballad, Child included as many variants and versions as he could find. His notes on each song reflect his extensive research into related songs and tales within the British tradition, as well as those of other cultures, particularly of northern Europe. Child's numbering system is still used by scholars when referring to these songs. For instance, the song "Riddles Wisely Expounded" is Child #1, which means it is a version of the first song in Child's collection.

The second type of British ballad is the broadside. Broadsides are songs that were printed on single sheets of paper and sold by street vendors. They were popular from the 1600s through the 1900s. The authors of broadsides often wrote about current events and famous people, frequently using the melodies of well-known songs. Broadside ballads were very popular and circulated widely for centuries, enriching singers' repertoires as they were honed through oral transmission.

Ballads in the New World

When the classic ballads and broadsides traveled with emigrants from England, Scotland, and Ireland to America, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, they were adapted to their new surroundings and local variants developed. As the British Isles became more industrialized and their peoples more widely educated, some of the ballads lasted longer in the oral tradition of the colonies than they did in their homeland, flourishing especially in isolated and close-knit

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communities. The ballad tradition also continued to grow in its new surroundings as local, or native, ballads were written about events and conditions in the New World.

Classic ballads and broadsides also were called popular ballads, because they were sung for entertainment. In many ways, modern soap operas and tabloids, with their sensational stories of infidelity, jealousy, and murder, are the descendants of the British ballads.

For centuries, a process of cross-fertilization between the print and oral ballad traditions resulted in the development of many versions of ballads. Each version had variations in the plot and setting and often contained different details, such as names and locations, but the kernel of the story remained recognizable.

Melody and Structure

The music of popular ballads communicated emotions that were not addressed directly through the often spare plotlines of the older ballads. A good story put to music could touch the hearts of both a singer and his or her audience. In reading a ballad, it is sometimes difficult to understand why anyone would find it interesting enough to listen to, while hearing a performance of the same ballad allows the listener to recognize and appreciate the story's emotional power.

The melody and structure of a ballad can act as a memory aid for the singer. Repeated phrases, called refrains, also encourage listeners to pay closer attention and to sing along. Refrains often consist of either nonsense syllables or related names, for example, "Parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme."

Two other structural devices can be used to encourage group participation: incremental repetition and cumulation. Songs that use incremental repetition have one basic stanza that is repeated with a different person, action, or item substituted each time. An example of a song that uses incremental repetition is "The Maid Freed from the Gallows" (Child #95), in America often called "The Hangman." Every verse is the same stanza with only one change, in this case the character—father, mother, brother, sister, lover.

A cumulative song is one that repeats all previous verses each time a new verse is sung. Well-known examples, such as the traditional "Green Grow the Rushes-O" and revival folksinger Oscar Brand's song "When I First Came to This Land," are very popular with performers and audiences alike, because these songs are fun to sing as a group. Variations of these techniques are familiar to storytellers, who find that ballads easily fit into their repertoire.

Subject Matter

Ballad plots encompass many facets of the human condition from tragedy to comedy, but most are concerned with the universal themes of love, jealousy, loss, and family or community conflicts. Ballads also keep alive stories generated from the fringes of society: stories of battles from the loser's point of view; stories of ghosts, fairies, and other supernatural beings; and stories of pirates, poachers, and outlaws, real and legendary.

Some of the classic ballads have plots and characters that are very similar to those in fairy tales. In the ballad "Tam Lin" (Child #39), the main character's sweetheart, Janet, saves him from the queen of the fairies by holding on to him even when he is changed into a snake, a lion, and other creatures. A few of the oldest ballads are adaptations of legends about biblical times, such as "St. Stephen and Herod" (Child #22), in which a roasted cock stands up in the dish and crows to convince Herod of the truth of the birth of Jesus.

Some ballads, including the many ballads about Robin Hood (Child #117–#154), are based on legends. These were seldom collected from oral tradition but sometimes were printed as broadsides. Another ballad written in a literary style and seldom recorded by singers is "King Orfeo" (Child #19), which is based on the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice.

Ballads also may be bawdy or comic, poking fun at individuals, classes of people, and the

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human condition in general. "Get Up and Bar the Door" (Child #275), for example, takes a couple's spat to laughable extremes when neither will lose a bet by closing the house door first, even after thieves come in and steal all their valuables. Some humorous ballads are analogous to tall tales, for example, "The Derby Ram," with its outrageous claims about the huge size of the ram.

The Modern Ballad

Narrative songs continue to be written and are often concerned with current events, notorious people, and occupational concerns, as earlier broadside ballads had been. A body of songs about accidents and natural disasters expanded with society's growing technological sophistication to include sinking ships, train wrecks, and truck accidents on mountain highways. In years past, songs about miners, sailors, and lumberjacks were common within their occupational groups and their communities but were seldom sung by outsiders.

Many modern broadside ballads also have been written about people on the fringes of society, such as pirates, highwaymen, and other outlaws, and about the public executions of criminals. Major events and movements, such as the Civil War and the California Gold Rush, spawned their own ballads. Some of these ballads were sung nationwide, while others were sung only in certain geographic regions or among certain groups of people.

Many people are familiar with the term *ballad* from its use in literature to mean a poem that tells a story, such as in "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," by Oscar Wilde. The term is also used in popular music and jazz, where it refers to a love song or lament, for example, "Ode to Billy Joe," "Harper Valley PTA," "Big Bad John," and even "The Ballad of Jed Clampett" from the 1960s television show *The Beverly Hillbillies*.

Lyn Wolz

See also: Ballads, Homiletic; Broadside Ballads; Verse Stories.

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Ballads, Homiletic

Homiletic ballads are narrative songs, often narrated in the first person, that warn of consequences for sinful actions. These ballads give the details of a sinning, misspent life and the subsequent repentance that often comes far too late. Listeners are warned to take heed of the story and to avoid making the same mistakes as the ballad's protagonist.

One example of this form is the English folk ballad "The House Carpenter," in which a woman abandons her husband, the house carpenter, for her former lover. The couple flees on a ship that sinks and takes the woman and her lover to hell.

Another example is an English broadside ballad, "The Unfortunate Rake." The title character dies when he is "disordered by a woman," which, of course, would not have happened if he had resisted vice. This song made the trip to America and eventually became "The Streets of Laredo."

Homiletic ballads were particularly popular in England and America in the nineteenth century, but there are many more recent examples, including the still-popular ballad "The House of the Rising Sun," the current form of which was composed in the twentieth century. The original melody is much older than the lyrics, which warn the listener "not to do what I have done."

See also: Ballads.

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Bannik

(Slavic)

In Slavic lore, specifically that of Russia and Ukraine, the *bannik* was the spirit of the *bania,* or the bathhouse. A typical Slavic bathhouse was not a small room like a modern bathroom, but a separate structure, much like a modern sauna, with a room for steaming and another for bathing.

The bannik has been described as looking like a little old man with hairy hands and long nails. He made a home for himself behind the stove and was almost never seen. This was considered to be for the best, since the bannik was uncertain in mood. Because the bathhouse was a dark, potentially dangerous place, the bannik was seen as a mischievous, sometimes harmful, being. If the bannik was angered, it might suffocate the bather, throw boiling water, or even burn down the bania. A bannik also might be a Peeping Tom, spying on bathers, particularly women, as they undressed. It was considered perilous to bathe alone or late at night.

The bannik was a pagan being, so no icons were ever hung in the bania, and bathers were careful not to wear crucifixes into the bath. Mothers with new babies were kept under careful guard in the bania, since the bannik sometimes tried to carry off children who had not yet been baptized.

Bathhouses were kept clean to appease the bannik. It was considered polite to thank him when leaving the bathhouse and to leave him offerings of soap, water, and fir branches. The third or fourth round of bathing always was reserved for the bannik, who liked to bathe alone in the dark.

As in stories of the Slavic house being known as the *domovoi,* the bannik was said to tell fortunes. Girls and women would go to the bania to ask the bannik how the New Year would be. A cold touch or one made with the bannik's claws was a warning of bad fortune, but a soft, warm touch meant happiness.

A special ritual had to be performed before a new bania could be built. A black chicken was slain and buried under the site, and salt was thrown over the stove when the bania was first heated.

See also: Slavic Mythology.

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Banshee

(Irish)

In Irish folklore, a *banshee* is an attendant fairy being that follows old, established families and wails outside the door when one of them is meant to die.

The word *banshee* derives from the Irish Gaelic words *bean,* or "woman," and *sidhe,* which means "fairy." The banshee is sometimes seen as an old woman with scraggly hair and huge, hollow eye sockets, or as a gaunt younger woman. In both forms, her eyes are red from continuous weeping, and she wears a tattered white sheet or a burial shroud.

All the greatest clans are said to have their own private banshee, and many have claimed to have seen one wailing and wringing her hands. When a great or holy clan member is to die, a whole chorus of banshees is said to wail mournfully.

A variation of the banshee is the *bean-nighe,* or washerwoman, of Ireland, Scotland, and Brittany. This creature usually was seen

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washing bloody garments at the water's edge. If a traveler saw her before she spied him, the traveler would survive. However, if she saw him first, the garments she was washing became his, and the traveler would die. In the Scottish Highlands, it was thought that only those about to die could see the bean-nighe.

An omen called the *coiste-bodhar* (pronounced coach-a-bower) sometimes accompanies the banshee. This immense black coach with a coffin inside is drawn by headless horses and driven by a headless being. If the coach stops by your home and you open the door, a basin of blood will be thrown in your face.

See also: Death.

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Basile, Giambattista

(1575–1632)

Giambattista Basile was the Italian author of a major collection of tales called *Il Pentamerone*.

Basile was born in 1575 in a village outside Naples, and he grew up in a middle-class family. In spite of having had a decent education, Basile was unable to find a court patron in Naples to present him in important society, so he became a soldier in the service of various Italian courts. He eventually returned to Naples, became a courtier, rose through the political ranks, and was eventually named Conte di Torrone. While this military and political maneuvering was taking place, Basile also was writing poetry and prose.

Basile never achieved major fame as a writer during his lifetime. *Il Pentamerone* was published after his death under its original title, *Lo cunto de li cunti, overo lo trattenemiento de peccerille* (*The Tale of Tales, or Entertainment for Little Ones*). Despite what the title suggests, Basile probably intended his stories for courtiers rather than children. His tales are sophisticated and do not always have a happy ending.

Il Pentamerone is an important work, because it is probably the first collection of literary fairy tales. It includes what may be the earliest European literary versions of many well-known fairy tales, such as "Sleeping Beauty" and "Rapunzel."

Il Pentamerone begins and ends with a frame story, in which a magic doll casts a spell on a queen who then develops a craving for stories. This craving is at last satisfied when the queen is able to hear the ten finest storytellers in the land tell their stories for five days. Including the frame story, *Il Pentamerone* is comprised of fifty tales.

Basile wrote *Il Pentamerone* in the Neapolitan dialect rather than in the preferred northern Italian language, so it did not immediately find a wide audience. The work was not translated into another language until 1846, when a German edition was published. The first English translation was made in the late nineteenth century.

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Basilisk

(European)

The legendary *basilisk* was one of the most feared monsters in medieval Western Europe. Described as the king of the serpents, this creature could kill with a single glance.

The word *basilisk* is Greek for "little king." A small but horrific reptile, it was believed to be a nearly unstoppable foe and predator. It could kill the largest animal or split a boulder with nothing more than a glance from its deadly eyes. Its breath was so poisonous that whatever

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stream it drank from was made forever toxic. A basilisk's sweat and saliva were also poisonous—one spit at a bird would kill it in midflight.

Strangely enough, weasels were immune to the basilisk's stare, and the common cockerel's crow would scare a basilisk away. Rue was the only plant that was impervious to the basilisk's poison. And so it followed that if a weasel was injured while fighting a basilisk, it could eat rue to heal itself.

A basilisk is also a type of lizard that lives in the rain forests of South America. It bears no relationship to the mythical basilisk other than its name.

See also: Bestiary.

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This ornate drinking vessel portrays the legendary, deadly basilisk. The artifact is from Leipzig, Germany, and dates to about 1600 C.E., a time when belief in such monsters was just beginning to fade. *(Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)*

Basque Folklore and Mythology

The homeland of the Basque people straddles the border between France and Spain along the western Pyrenees. These fascinating people may have lived in this ancient homeland since the Neolithic Period.

The Basque people are unique. They are genetically different from the people in the surrounding lands and have a language that is not related to any other. Present-day Basques are predominantly Christian, but echoes of older beliefs still can be found in their national traditions and folktales.

Deities

Lurbira is the goddess of the earth and the mother of the twin sisters Ekhi and Ilazki. Ekhi is the goddess of the Sun and of sunlight, and Ilazki is the goddess of the Moon. Ilazki uses her light to guide the ghosts of the dead to the hereafter.

Aide is the goddess of the wind. Mari, whose name was probably derived from the Virgin Mary, is a figure of folklore and mythology. She usually is conceived as a tall, beautiful, and kindly woman with some kind of magical or semidivine powers. Mari may be a survivor of older pagan beliefs.

Supernatural Beings

An *aatxe* is a spirit in the form of a red bull that protects caves and attacks evil people. An aatxe is said to have set Bermeo, a village of purportedly evil people, on fire.

Basajaun is the Old Man of the Woods, or Lord of the Woods. He is commonly depicted as a semidivine figure with some animal characteristics and is often, but not always, regarded as malevolent. In some stories, Basajaun has a female companion called Basandere. There are late medieval carvings of these creatures in the Cathedral of Saint-Maria in Burgos, Spain.

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Gaueko is a nocturnal spirit or demon in the shape of a great black wolfhound that walks upright. Herensuge and Sugaar are two monstrous serpents. Herensuge is usually portrayed as a sea serpent.

The *jentilak* are a race of giants who threw rocks from one mountain to another. They are credited with having built old stone ruins and other Neolithic monuments. They also are said to have invented metallurgy, agriculture, and the Basque ball game called pelota. The jentilak disappeared into the earth with the arrival of Christianity. Only one, Olentzero, remains. He is said to appear at Christmastime to leave presents for children. Over the centuries, he has changed from a giant to a Basque peasant. The *mairuak,* whose name means "moors," also are said to have been giants that built the dolmens and menhirs, and they were driven away by the coming of Christianity.

The *lamiak,* whose name may be derived from the Greek *lamia,* are said to be beautiful but evil women. They take human form, but have animal feet. They deceive, enchant, and kill young men.

The *sorgin* is the Basque folkloric witch. She is common to many folktales and possesses attributes of certain pagan beliefs.

The *torto* is a monstrous being that abducts and eats children. He is likely to have been invented by parents as a way to make children behave.

Basque Folktales

Two samples of Basque folktales follow. The first shows definite influences from the outside world, incorporating the Rumpelstiltskin theme and the "never-in-my-life" theme that appears in Celtic changeling tales. The second tale has ties to older mythology.

The Young Man Who Fell in Love with a Lamiak

A young man fell in love with a beautiful, mysterious woman. She agreed to marry him if he could tell her age. A local woman agreed to help the young man. She went to the mysterious woman's cave and bent over so that she was looking out from between her legs.

The beautiful woman, a lamiak, announced, "In all my 105 years, I have never seen such a sight!"

The helper rushed to the young man with the information. He was about to tell the lamiak her age when he saw her feet, which were nonhuman animal feet. He fled, fell ill, and died.

Mariurrika

A couple had a son and a daughter, Ibon and Mariurrika. Ibon was the eldest, and Mariurrika had a dark side. She did not want her brother to claim their inheritance, so she and a servant decided to kill him. They gave Ibon too much wine. When he was asleep, they threw him off a cliff, and he fell to his death. Everyone believed it had been an accident.

That night, Mariurrika saw demons sliding down the chimney to claim her for her evil deed. She died on the spot. Since then, Mariurrika has been a fireball that flies from mountain to mountain. She rests only when she takes refuge in the cave of the goddess Mari.

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Bastet/Bast

(Egyptian)

Bastet, or Bast, is a protective and nurturing Egyptian feline deity. She was one of the daughters of Re, the sun god.

In the earliest representations of Bastet, she appeared as a lioness or as a woman with the head of a lioness. Bastet served as a

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counterpoint to the violent Sekhmet, who also had the head of a lioness and was a goddess of war. Sekhmet was the punishing eye of Re, whereas Bastet was the gentle one.

Bastet originated no later than the second dynasty (c. 2800 B.C.E.). The cult of Bastet probably centered in the delta city of Bubastis. Sometime between 931 and 715 B.C.E., the domestic cat replaced the lioness as the manifestation of the goddess. Cats were specifically bred in the temples to honor Bastet from about this time through the Roman period (30 B.C.E.–337 C.E.).

The rise in Egypt of animal cults stemmed from political circumstances. The state profited from the cults by selling official appointments and collecting taxes and pious donations. When Egypt was under Greco-Roman rule, these cults became the focus of Egyptian nationalism and reached fanatical heights. The Sicilian writer Diodorus Siculus (first century B.C.E.) recounted an event in which a mob murdered a Roman visitor who had inadvertently killed a cat. Animal cults existed among the Romans in Egypt, as well as in native Egyptian society.

Festivals in Bastet's honor were popular throughout Egypt. The Greek author Herodotus claimed to have been one of more than 700,000 participants at a celebration in Bubastis. Enormous quantities of feline statuettes and mummies have been discovered by researchers.

Bastet is usually represented as a cat-headed woman, with a kitten or kittens at her feet and sometimes a basket, perhaps in which to carry them. She holds in one hand a systrum, a kind of musical instrument associated with Hathor, goddess of love, and in the other an aegis, a symbol of Sekhmet.

Bastet is one of the goddesses named as the mother of the canine god Anubis. The Greeks identified her with Artemis, the Greek goddess of fertility.

Noreen Doyle

See also: Cats.

Bastet, or Bast, the Egyptian cat-headed goddess of sensual joy and dance is shown in bronze holding a systrum, a musical instrument, in her upraised right hand. On her left arm hangs a basket, and she cradles a kitten or small cat, her patron animal. *(Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY)*

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Bats

The nocturnal habits of bats have led to the association of these perfectly innocent animals with stories about evil creatures of the night. Bats always have received mixed reactions from people around the

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world, and they play diverse roles in folklore and superstition.

In the ancient Near East, especially in what is now Turkey, bats were sometimes eaten. One of the earliest negative references to bats comes from the Old Testament, in which they are called unclean and "an abomination." Conversely, the Chinese viewed the bat as a symbol of good luck, and two bats together are the symbol of Sho-hsing, the god of longevity. Also in China, a group of four bats symbolizes the four blessings of health, wealth, long life, and peace. In Japan, however, the bat is looked upon not as a symbol of prosperity but as a sign of chaos.

The cultures of Mesoamerica and South America viewed bats as symbols of the underworld and the return to life. Images of man-bat hybrid deities appear on pottery and carvings throughout both regions, often as sacrificial beings or intermediaries between the land of the living and the land of the dead.

In the modern Western world, bats are commonly viewed as creatures from the dark side. People still worry that if a bat flies too close it will become tangled in someone's hair. The fact that bats have highly developed sonar that keeps them from collisions has done little to counteract this superstition.

In some regions of England and the United States, a bat circling a house three times is viewed a warning of impending death. A bat flying playfully, however, is a good omen, forecasting fair weather. The latter contains a bit of truth, since better atmospheric conditions mean easier flying for bats.

The phrase "blind as a bat" perpetuates another misconception. Bats have perfectly good vision. And only three related species, vampire bats native to the Americas, drink blood. These bats have no connection with the undead vampires of folklore, other than being named after them.

Bats also turn up in opera and popular culture. In the Johann Strauss operetta *Die Fledermaus* (*The Bat*), one of the main characters is caught in public in a bat costume after a masquerade and mocked by the local populace. In the world of comic books and graphic novels, the bat appears in a more heroic guise, as the ultimate man-bat figure, the brooding crime fighter, Batman.

See also: Vampires.

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Battle of Kadesh

(Egyptian)

The battle of Kadesh is the earliest armed conflict for which a detailed record has survived. It was fought around 1299 B.C.E. between Ramses II of Egypt and Muwatillis of Hatti in the city of Kadesh, or Qadesh, which is situated at a strategic location in Syria (present-day Tell Neby Mend).

Kadesh and the region surrounding it had long been a subject of contention between the two empires. In the eighteenth dynasty (c. 1569–1315 B.C.E.), Kadesh was under Egyptian rule. But by the time of Ramses II, who was also known as Ramses the Great (c. 1304–1237 B.C.E.), the city had fallen into the Hittite sphere of influence. The young pharaoh was determined to retake it. The record of Ramses's deeds was found in thirteen existing texts on temple walls and papyri.

The record consists of three major parts: the poem, which focuses on the king, his deeds, and his thoughts; the bulletin, or report, which focuses on more external details; and the iconography, which depicts visually and in captions the details of the battle that were not preserved in the literary narrative record. This summary combines the particulars of all three.

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The Story

In the summer of the fifth year of his reign, Ramses II prepared his troops and, along with a number of family members, journeyed north through Palestine. They inspired fear in the local chieftains along the way and encountered no trouble.

Near the town of Shabtuna, two tribesmen approached the king. They said that the Fallen One, as they called the Hittite king, Muwatillis, had made a treaty with their tribe, but they were willing to betray Muwatillis. To allay Ramses's suspicions and prove their honest intent, the tribesmen told him that the Hittite king was near Aleppo, more than a hundred miles from Kadesh, and would remain there because he feared the pharaoh.

Emboldened by this news, Ramses pressed ahead to Kadesh with a group of soldiers referred to as the division of Amun. He left behind three other divisions, named for the gods Pre (Re), Seth, and Ptah. Once on the outskirts of Kadesh, Ramses set up camp and planned to attack the city the next morning.

The capture of two Hittite spies disrupted Ramses's plans. Thorough beatings of the enemy agents revealed that Muwatillis and his army were not at Aleppo. They instead were hidden behind Kadesh, ready to attack. King Muwatillis had stripped his own land bare of silver and other valuables in order to prepare this army.

Ramses summoned his officers. This was, they agreed, criminal. Their allies should have warned them of these circumstances. The vizier went south to bring up the rest of the Egyptian army, but at this point Muwatillis attacked.

The Hittites broke the division of Pre as it forded the Orontes River; the other two divisions were still on the march farther south, in the Wood of Labni. The division of Amun, which had been setting up camp at the time of the attack, was thrown into chaos.

Differing Accounts

In the poem, the army deserted Ramses at this point, who fought, godlike, in his chariot while chastising his troops for their cowardice. Only his shield-bearer, Menna, his horses, and his servants remained faithfully by his side, as did the god Amun, who responded to the king's prayer by proclaiming that the god's own hand was with him. And so Ramses single-handedly defeated the Hittites.

The endings of the report and the iconography differ from that of the poem. In these accounts, the king rallied the scattered divisions of Amun and Pre sufficiently to mount something of a defense. They were saved, however, only by the timely arrival of a fifth contingent that had been traveling the coastal route and approached from the west. With the Hittites pushed back, there was time for the divisions of Ptah and of Seth to rejoin the king.

The next morning (according to all three sources) the battle began anew, with Ramses seizing the offensive. The Egyptians were outnumbered, yet they killed many of the Hittite charioteers and officers, including two of Muwatillis's brothers. The fight remained a stalemate. Muwatillis allowed Ramses to withdraw, an action the Egyptian sources portrayed as inspired by fear rather than prudence.

The Egyptian sources claim a great victory, with the king of Hatti praising Ramses like a god and capitulating. In fact, the Egyptians did not regain Kadesh but rather lost their subject territories in Syria.

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Bees

Bees, specifically honeybees, may be the earliest domesticated insects in human history.

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There is evidence of beekeeping in the fourth millennium B.C.E.

Bees are found in almost every country in the world. The honey they produce is both nutritious and a very good natural antiseptic. There is a large body of world folk belief and mythology surrounding these useful insects.

Egypt, Greece, and Rome

In Egyptian mythology, honeybees were said to be the tears of the sun god, Ra. They also were associated with the goddess Neith, whose temple was known as *per-bit,* or "the house of the bee." Honey, which was used by physicians to heal wounds, also was thought to protect patients against evil spirits.

The chief Greek god, Zeus, was nourished as a baby by honeybees. The god Apollo's temple was said to have been built by bees. The Roman goddess Mellona was the protector of bees.

Europe

A German legend tells of bees that were sent from God to make beeswax for candles. In Breton, it was told that the tears of the crucified Christ were turned into bees to bring sweetness into the world. In pagan Lithuanian mythology, Austėja was a goddess of bees.

Great Britain and the United States

An old English and American folk rhyme says:

A swarm of bees in May
Is worth a load of hay,
And a swarm of bees in July
Is hardly worth a fly.

There is a hint of accuracy to this, since May is one of the best months for flower blossoms, which attract bees for pollination. This, in turn, leads to more honey and set fruit. By July, pollination already has been finished. A weather-related maxim states that when bees do not leave the hive, rain is coming.

Other British-American beliefs include the following: Bees were thought to have special knowledge of the future; if a beekeeper died or something good happened to a family, it is important to inform the bees or they might die or fly away; a bride-to-be was supposed to inform the hive directly about her engagement; and, in the case of a death, a family member was supposed to tell the hive three times, "Little brownies, little brownies, your master/mistress [name] is dead."

After a wedding or a funeral feast, a piece of cake was left for the bees. In all cases, the language used to the bees must be polite, since bees will not stay near those who swear. The sound of the bees is said to indicate their mood: buzzing means they are content, but silence means that they are planning to leave. Finally, if a swarm settled on someone's property or was found in a dead tree, it was considered to be an omen of death in the family.

Killer Bees

Folklore recently has been spread that bad-tempered African "killer" bees will swarm a human and sting the victim to death. The truth is that the bees are so slow in flight that a healthy human easily can outpace them.

See also: Insects.

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Bellerophon

(Greek)

In Greek mythology, Bellerophon was a hero who tamed the winged horse Pegasus. He eventually allowed pride to overcome him, which led to his downfall.

Bellerophon was the son of Eurynome, wife of Glaucus. Though Glaucus did not know it, Bellerophon's father was Poseidon.

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Frustrated in his attempts to become a hero, Bellerophon went to the seer Polyeidus, who told him to sleep at an altar of Athena. Bellerophon did this, and dreamed that the goddess gave him a golden bridle. When he woke, he found himself holding the bridle. After making sacrifices to Athena and Poseidon, Bellerophon found where the winged horse Pegasus grazed. Pegasus had never been ridden, but once Bellerophon had bridled him, the young man was able to ride Pegasus without too much difficulty.

Later, Bellerophon accidentally killed a man and went to King Proetus so that he could be purified. The king's wife, Stheneboea, tried to seduce Bellerophon. He refused her, and she, insulted, accused him of trying to rape her.

King Proetus could not harm a houseguest, so he asked Bellerophon to deliver a sealed message to King Iobates, Stheneboea's father. The message contained Stheneboea's claim against Bellerophon.

The Greek hero Bellerophon rides the winged horse Pegasus as he slays the Chimera with his lance. This painting is by Renaissance master Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640). *(Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY)*

This passed the problem on to King Iobates, who also could not harm a houseguest. So Iobates sent Bellerophon off to kill a monster, the horrible Chimera. The Chimera was a strange creature—a combination of lion, goat, and serpent. The monster also could breathe fire, and no hero had been able to kill it. But with the help of Pegasus, Bellerophon was able to get in close and kill the Chimera.

Iobates then sent Bellerophon to defeat the Solymi. Bellerophon succeeded. Next Iobates gathered troops and tried to ambush Bellerophon, but the hero killed those warriors, too. Iobates realized that the gods favored Bellerophon, and such favor could never have been given to a dishonorable man. He made peace with Bellerophon and gave him half his kingdom and the hand of his daughter Philonoe in marriage.

When Stheneboea learned that Bellerophon had married her sister, she knew that her own falsehood would be uncovered. She killed herself.

Bellerophon should have been content, but instead the glory of his own deeds went to his head, and hubris, or fatal pride, overcame him. In his arrogance Bellerophon decided to ride Pegasus up to Mount Olympus to visit the gods. The gods were furious at this egotism, and Zeus, king of the gods, sent a gadfly to sting Pegasus. The horse bucked in midair and threw Bellerophon.

Bellerophon survived the fall but was left lame. Abandoned by the gods, he spent the rest of his life alone.

See also: Pegasus.

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Bendigeidfran/Bran

(Welsh)

In the pre-Christian mythology of Wales, as collected in the medieval book of tales known as the *Mabinogion,* Bendigeidfran was a giant and the king of the Isle of the Mighty (Britain). The name *Bendigeidfran* means Bran the Blessed. His sister, Branwen, and his brother, Manawydan, were human sized.

Bendigeidfran was so large that in the second branch of the *Mabinogion,* called "Branwen, Daughter of Llyr," he waded across the sea between Wales and Ireland and carried an army across the Liffey River on his back. No house was able to hold him, until one was built for him by the Irish.

When Bendigeidfran died, he left instructions that his severed head was to be buried in the White Hill, looking out toward France, so that it could defend Britain from invaders. The myths about him state that as long as his head was buried, no oppression could come to Britain. Myths also refer to the "unfortunate disclosure," when King Arthur unearthed Bendigeidfran's head, because it did not seem right to him that Britain should be defended by the strength of anyone but Arthur himself.

Lisa Spangenberg

See also: Giants.

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Beowulf

(Anglo-Saxon)

Beowulf is an anonymous epic poem, the finest example that remains of the Old English epic tradition interrupted by the Norman Conquest in 1066. Written about sixth-century figures and composed sometime between the middle of the seventh and the end of the tenth centuries, the poem is preserved only in an eleventh-century handwritten book known as *Cotton Vitellius.* The manuscript, which currently resides in the British Museum, is somewhat damaged, having narrowly escaped destruction in a fire in 1731.

The Story

The story begins with the Danish King Scyld Scefing, who was the mythical founder of the Scyld dynasty. Sent out to sea as an infant, Scyld became a great king, ruled gloriously, died with honor, and received a magnificent burial at sea.

Generations later, one of Scyld's descendants, King Hrothgar, built Heorot, a great gabled hall. Infuriated by the rejoicing in the hall, the monster Grendel, of the race of Cain, attacked it and terrorized Heorot for twelve years. Beowulf, the nephew of King Hygelac of the Geats (in present-day Sweden), came to Hrothgar's aid. Once thought slack, Beowulf had become a formidable hero, with the strength of thirty men in his grasp. Vowing to conquer the monster or die, he and his fourteen companions settled into the hall for the night.

When the monster arrived, he devoured one of Beowulf's men before Beowulf grabbed him. After a ferocious wrestling match, Beowulf ripped off Grendel's arm, and the mortally wounded monster fled from the hall and back to the moors.

That day, the Danes rejoiced. That night, Grendel's mother emerged from the fens (swamps), snatched up one of the king's chief advisers and her son's arm, which had been hung up as a trophy, and retreated again to her lair.

Death of Grendel

With the king and chosen warriors, Beowulf made the nightmarish journey to the pool

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Grendel, the monstrous enemy of the Anglo-Saxon hero Beowulf, is depicted with demon horns and animal claws. This illustration of a scene from the Old English epic of Beowulf was created in the early twentieth century. *(© British Library/HIP/Art Resource, NY)*

where Grendel's mother lurked. Beowulf plunged into the pool and was nearly killed. Just as the she-monster sat on her "guest" and prepared to stab him, Beowulf snatched up an ancient, magical sword and killed her.

When Beowulf cut off Grendel's head, the blade of the sword melted. Taking the golden hilt and the monster's head, Beowulf swam back to the surface, where he celebrated. He returned home to King Hygelac and a hero's welcome.

King Beowulf

After the deaths of King Hygelac and his son, Heardred, Beowulf became king and ruled the Geats for fifty years. Toward the end of his reign, a dragon's hoard was robbed by a slave, and the dragon rose, setting the countryside on fire, and retrieving its hoard.

Ordering an iron shield made, Beowulf set out with eleven men for the dragon's lair. But Beowulf vowed to take on the dragon himself. Feeling his end approaching, Beowulf reviewed his life story, saying farewell to his men.

The battle went against the hero. All of his men fled except for young Wiglaf, who defended the king. Together, he and Beowulf destroyed the dragon, but Beowulf was mortally wounded. He ordered Wiglaf to take the treasure out of the cave, thanked God that he had been able to win it, ordered his burial mound, gave Wiglaf his battle gear, and died.

The poem ends with the Geats throwing the dragon's body into the sea, burning Beowulf on a great pyre, and building his burial mound. There they also buried the treasure, which was as useless then as it always had been from the time the dragon gathered it.

Twelve warriors rode around the mound, bemoaning the loss of their lord, whom they called the gentlest of men and the most gracious, the most kindly to his people, and the most eager to win fame.

Tradition and Language

As compared to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,* both written hundreds of years later, *Beowulf* is relatively short at 3,182 lines. Like the Greek epics, it is heroic and deals with the noble class. But where the Greeks regard Olympian intervention as a relatively normal, if often unwelcome, occurrence in epics, the Old English tradition fuses Teutonic, or Germanic, fatalism with Christianity.

In *Beowulf,* life is a struggle between humans and monsters, among people, or between humankind and the environment. A hero can win the struggle as long as his will is strong and his *wyrd,* or destiny, does not decree otherwise. Any victories, however, except for the gaining of a good name, are temporary because life is *laene,* or transitory. Stark as this worldview is, the *Beowulf* poet offers hope by speaking of a

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biblical God as *halig Scyppend,* holy Creator; *mihtig Metod,* mighty governor; *wuldres Wealdend,* ruler of glory; *Liffrea,* lord of life; and *wuldorfaeder,* glorious father.

Some of the characters in the poem, such as Hygelac, Beowulf's king, and Hrothgar, the Danish king, are mentioned in other sources, such as the work of Gregory of Tours, who dates Hygelac's raid into Frankish territory to 521 C.E. Subsequent mentions occur in Saxo Grammaticus's Danish history and Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla,* the Icelandic collection of sagas, as well as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* a collection of historic records of events in British history.

Old English poetry originally was composed and recited by a *scop,* a performer who sang epics at important ceremonies and festivals. By the time *Beowulf* actually was written down, however, it had probably gone through several centuries of recitation. The evidence for this lies in the fact that the language of the written version includes not just West Saxon forms but other regional elements as well, such as Anglian, Mercian, Kentish, and Northumbrian.

The language is both archaic and noble. The work begins with *Hwaet,* the Old English equivalent of "once upon a time." The reader is taken back into misty history, where historic personages coexisted with monsters and dragons' lairs. Another major feature of the verse is the kenning—compound words or phrases that express metaphors. Phrases for the sea, for example, include "swan's road," "gannet's bath," and "whale's path."

Although occasionally broken by humor and irony, the language of *Beowulf* is somber, marked by awareness that happiness in the world is hard-won and quickly extinguished—*lif ond leoht somod,* or life and light together.

Susan M. Shwartz

See also: Epics.

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Berekhiah ben Natronai ha-Nakdan

Berekhiah ben Natronai ha-Nakdan was a French Jewish fabulist, writer, and translator who was active in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. He was also a biblical commentator and philosopher.

Almost nothing is known about Berekhiah ben Natronai ha-Nakdan's life. His collection of fables, *Mishlei Shualim* (*Fox Fables*), is derived from several sources. Some come from the now-lost Latin translation of Aesop's fables, some from Jewish or Middle Eastern sources, and some from the stories of the twelfth-century author Marie de France.

Berekhiah's fables are unique because he added narrative details to traditional stories, introduced biblical quotations and allusions, and incorporated the language and lessons of the Old Testament.

See also: Fables.

Source

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Bestiary

A bestiary is a medieval book of animals in the style of an illustrated encyclopedia. It contains short descriptions and religious interpretations of both real and fantastic animals, birds, and gemstones. An element of fantasy makes these collections good sources of information for storytellers and scholars.

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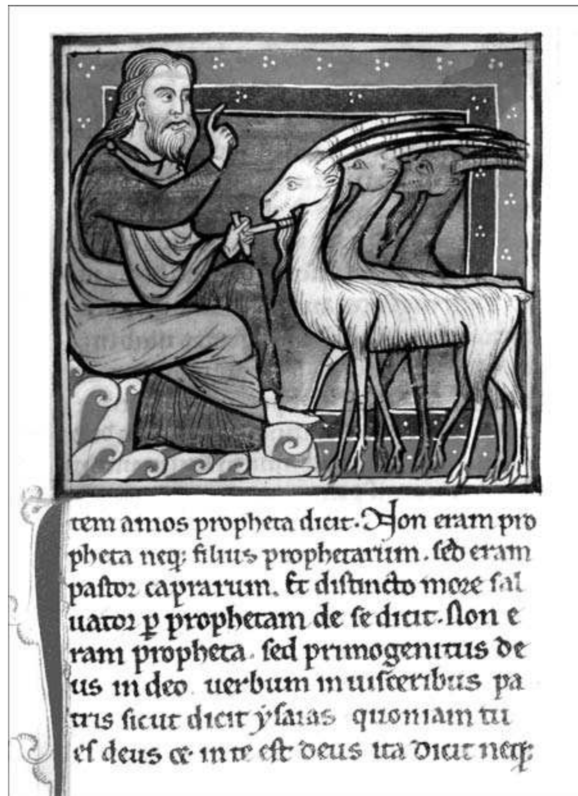
tem amos propheta dicit. Non eram pro
pheta neq; filius prophetarum. sed eram
pastor caprarum. & distincto more sal
uator p prophetam de se dicit. Non e
ram propheta. sed primogenitus de
us in deo. uerbum in uisceribus pa
tris sicut dicit ysaias quoniam tu
es deus & in te est deus ita dicit neq;

The *Workshop Bestiary* was printed in England, possibly in Lincoln or York, in the early twelfth century C.E. This page shows goats listening to the preaching of the prophet Amos. *(The Pierpont Morgan Library/Art Resource, NY)*

At the heart of each bestiary was a work called the *Physiologus* (*Naturalists*), which was originally assembled sometime between the second and fifth centuries. The work may have originated in the Near East, since the animals described in it can be identified as resembling actual creatures or artistic representations that have been found in Africa and western Asia. The *Physiologus* was translated into Latin around the sixth or seventh century. Each animal included in this work represents some aspect of the struggle between God and the devil for the souls of humans.

The majority of bestiaries were compiled in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Western Europe, and most that survive today originated in France and Britain. The best known is almost certainly the elegant and colorful *Aberdeen Bestiary,* which may date to the twelfth century.

Even the descriptions of real animals that are included in bestiaries have an element of fantasy. The description of the horse, for example, included an ancient bit of folklore that claimed that mares might be made pregnant by the west wind.

In addition to their entertainment value, bestiaries also featured religious instruction and explanations. The purpose of a bestiary probably was to connect the creatures of the earth with Christian symbolism, rather than teaching natural history.

Bestiary animals also are found sculpted on the walls of medieval churches, where they served to remind the often-illiterate congregation of religious stories.

See also: Amphisbaena; Basilisk; Catoblepas; Cockatrice; Manticore; Vegetable Sheep/Lamb.

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Black Dogs

(English)

In English folklore, supernatural black dogs are said to haunt the countryside. Nearly every county has at least one example.

The two most familiar legendary black dogs are the Barghest of Yorkshire and Black Shuck of East Anglia. The name of the latter likely derives from the Old English *scucca,* which means "demon."

These beasts are nocturnal and are generally described as monstrous dogs with huge teeth and claws. Sometimes headless, they are portents of death or disaster. In the various counties of Britain, they are called by different names:

Cornwall: the Devil's Dandy (or Dando) Dogs

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Devon: the Yeth (Heath) or Wisht Hounds

Peel Castle on the Isle of Man: the Moddey Dhoo, or Mauthe Doog

Somerset: the Gurt Dog

Suffolk: Old Shock

West Yorkshire: Guytrashm, which in Lancashire is reduced to "Trash" or changed to "Skriker"

In 1127, Abbot Henry of Poitou was appointed to Peterborough Abbey. He recorded that "as soon as he came there . . . soon afterwards many people saw and heard many hunters hunting. The hunters were black and big and loathsome, and their hounds all black and wide-eyed and loathsome, and they rode on black horses and black goats."

Medieval Welsh author Walter Map (c. 1140–1209 C.E.) described a similar wild hunt around 1190. Map also wrote of the legend of Wild Edric in the Clun area of the Welsh marches. This legend, which persevered into the twentieth century, told of Edric, who was said to haunt the hills around Church Stretton in the form of a huge black dog.

One of the most familiar stories involving a black dog is Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles,* published in 1902. This work was inspired by the folktale of a phantom black dog on Dartmoor in Devon County.

Folklore also tells of some dramatic consequences that were the result of phantom black dog sightings. On Sunday, August 4, 1577, an extremely violent thunderstorm shook the church of Bungay, Suffolk, in England. A fearful black dog appeared inside the church. Two parishioners who were touched by the animal were instantly killed, and a third shriveled up like a drawn purse. On the same day, a similar hound appeared in the church at Blythburgh, seven miles away. This event resulted in the death of three people and the sudden illness of several others. Today, the Blythburgh market's weathervane depicts the fiendish hound.

As recently as 1960, a supernatural black dog is said to have been seen by two people in Somerset. Both died soon afterward. East Anglia, Essex, and Buckinghamshire all have examples of phantom dogs that arrived suddenly and disappeared in dramatic flashes, with horrifying results. In one case, a farmer burned to death, along with his horse and wagon.

Black dogs are mentioned in a few isolated instances in Latin American tales. But the phantom black dog, native to the British Isles, remains a singularly British phenomenon.

Bob Trubshaw

See also: Dogs; Kludde.

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Black Magic

(Western European)

Black magic, also known as the black arts, is magic that is used only for evil purposes either for the personal gain of the magician or with the intention of harming or killing another. Black magic traditionally is said to draw its power from or invoke demons, devils, or spirits of chaos and destruction. By contrast, white magic is never worked for harm and is said to draw power from heavenly forces.

There are numerous folktales in which black magic is a major element. In Iceland and other Scandinavian countries and in Scottish folklore, there was a belief that black magic was taught by Satan or some other demon at a so-called Black School in which students were trained in all the occult arts. All the tales agree that at the end of each term, the students would race for the door. The slowest student would be claimed as Satan's prize. But the tales also agree that a student who was clever enough could es-

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cape by tricking Satan into grabbing his shadow. As long as a student never used his powers for evil, he could keep his soul safe.

There are also many medieval stories of pacts with the devil and of black magicians losing wagers with Satan. These stories often center on learned men, such as the real-life Dr. Johann Faust of sixteenth-century Germany.

Black magic is a common plot element in modern fantasy novels, including those about Harry Potter. There also have been those who claimed to be black magicians in real life, such as the nineteenth-century mystic Alastair Crowley, but there is no evidence to support those claims.

In the world of computer programming, *black magic* is used as a tongue-in-cheek description of a technique that works even though nobody really understands why. And in popular music, black magic often refers to the power of love, in songs such as "That Old Black Magic" and "Black Magic Woman."

See also: White Magic.

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Black School

(Scandinavian and Scottish)

The Black School was a private school, said to have been run by the devil, where students were taught sorcery and the so-called black arts.

In the days before universal literacy and public schooling, those who were educated were sometimes thought to be in league with dark forces. This belief goes back at least to ancient Egypt, where a scholarly son of Pharaoh Ramses II was thought to be a magician. In medieval Scandinavia and Scotland, the linking of education with sorcery was said to include the Black School. Following are two summarized versions of traditional Black School tales.

In medieval and Renaissance Scotland, it was believed that those who studied the black arts had to have made a compact with Satan. The black arts included all types of magical knowledge, including good and bad practices, such as healing, dealing with herbs, and guarding against evil spirits. It was said that those who learned such skills studied in underground schools that were located in Spain or Italy. It was also said that some of the students learned such cunning and cleverness that they could outwit the devil.

On the last day of school, as the last word of the last lecture was spoken, the students all fled through a long, dark corridor, where Satan waited to snatch the last one. If that last student cried to the devil, "There's another one behind me!" Satan would see what he thought was another student and grab at it, only to find that it was the clever student's shadow.

In Iceland, students at the Black School studied all manner of magical arts. Classes were held somewhere underground, in a dark place where the students read from books with fiery letters. They were not permitted to leave that dark place for the length of their study, which lasted from five to seven years. One rule that all the students knew was that the owner of the school, the devil, would claim whichever student was last to leave the school.

There were three Icelanders among the students in this school, Saemundur the Learned, Kálfur Arnason, and Hálfdán Eldjárnsson. Saemundur stated that he would be the last to leave, and he threw a large mantle over himself, leaving the sleeves loose and the fastenings free. As Saemundur started up the staircase to the upper world, the devil cried, "You are mine!" But as the devil grabbed Saemunder's mantle, Saemunder slipped out of it, leaving the devil holding only the mantle. Saemunder rushed up the stairs and out through the open door. In

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another version of this tale, it was Saemunder's shadow that was taken, as in the Scottish tale.

See also: Black Magic; Tale Types.

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Bluebeard

(Western European)

The Bluebeard folktale, about a psychotic and murderous husband and his curious wife, can be taken as a warning against either wifely disobedience or taking up with a man one barely knows.

Probably the most familiar version of this dark folktale is the one told by Charles Perrault, the seventeenth-century French author. In this account, Bluebeard was a dark and ominous nobleman with a literally blue beard. Fatima, the youngest of three sisters, agreed to marry him, in spite of his forbidding temperament.

Upon Fatima's arrival at his castle, Bluebeard gave his new bride the keys to every room. But he sternly forbade her to enter one small chamber. The suspense proved too much for Fatima. When her husband was away, she unlocked and opened the forbidden door—and was confronted with utter horror. The room was filled with blood, and on the wall hung the dead bodies of Bluebeard's former wives.

Terrified, Fatima shut and locked the door, unaware that there was blood on the key. Bluebeard would know from that blood what the terrified young woman had done and seen. He would have murdered her, too, but her brothers arrived in the nick of time and killed Bluebeard.

Although it is theorized that Perrault based the character of Bluebeard on the real-life fifteenth-century serial killer Gilles de Rais, the tale type shows up in versions from Germany, Italy, and other countries. In the Italian version, the devil, not Bluebeard, is the villain.

The French version of the folktale of the murderous Bluebeard is "Barbe Bleue." These two scenes are from the operetta of that name by French composer Jacques Offenbach (1819–1880). *(Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY)*

The story of Bluebeard inspired the work of three composers. In 1866, Frenchman Jacques Offenbach wrote an operetta about Barbe Bleue (Bluebeard). In 1907, French composer Paul Dukas wrote *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* (*Ariane and Bluebeard*), a more eerily psychological take on the tale that reflected the growing interest in psychiatry at the time. And in 1911, the Hungarian composer and folk musicologist Béla Bartók wrote *Bluebeard's Castle,* a darkly psychological and sensual version of the story.

Today, a murderous husband still may be referred to as a Bluebeard.

See also: Perrault, Charles; Tale Types.

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Boccaccio, Giovanni

(1313–1375)

Giovanni Boccaccio was a fourteenth-century Italian poet and storyteller, noted primarily as the author of the *Decameron*.

Boccaccio was born in Paris in 1313, the illegitimate son of an Italian father and a French mother. His merchant father had gone into business in Paris but soon left France and Boccaccio's mother, taking the young Boccaccio with him to Florence. In 1327, Boccaccio was sent to Naples to study law, but he soon turned to literature instead.

Sources disagree, but some say that in about 1334, Boccaccio first saw a woman named Maria D'Aquino, according to some records the daughter of King Robert. She is said to have been the one to introduce Boccaccio at court and to have encouraged him to write. He was later said to have immortalized her in prose and verse as Fiammetta.

Early Works

Boccaccio's first and longest work, perhaps inspired by Maria d'Aquino, is the *Filocolo*. Written between 1338 and 1340, it is a version of the popular medieval story "Floire and Blanchefleur" and contains both Christian and pagan elements. The *Ameto,* written in the next two years, is an allegorical work that includes the tragic story of Boccaccio's mother.

Other early works include *Filostrato,* which sets the story "Troilus and Cressida," a medieval fable also used by Geoffrey Chaucer and William Shakespeare, in the Neopolitan court. Boccaccio's story "Fiammetta" is perhaps the most original and the most personal of his works, since Panfilo, Fiammetta's hero and lover, may represent Boccaccio.

Boccaccio's father died in 1348, and Boccaccio took on the guardianship of his younger brother. From the mid-1340s on, Boccaccio held various public offices in Florence and served as a diplomat to Padua, the Romagna, Avignon, and elsewhere. It was during these trips that he met the great poet Petrarch in 1350, and the two became lifelong friends.

Inspired by the learned Petrarch, Boccaccio became a scholar of Latin and Greek. Few Italians of the time could read classical Greek, and Boccaccio had to hire a private teacher in order to study Homer.

Decameron

Between 1348 and 1353, Boccaccio wrote the work for which he is best known, the *Decameron,* a collection of stories told by ten characters—seven ladies and three gentlemen—who have come to a villa outside of Naples to avoid the ravages of the Black Death. On each of ten days, each of the company tells a story, totaling one hundred tales in all. The name *Decameron* means "Ten Days' Work."

The tales range from humorous to folkloric to erotic. Geoffrey Chaucer's later work *The Canterbury Tales* (written between 1387 and 1400) features a similar framework, in which a group of people share tales to entertain themselves during the course of a pilgrimage.

In his later years, Boccaccio published scholarly works on subjects as disparate as mythology and geography. Never wealthy, he also was plagued by ill health. In Florence in 1373, he began a series of lectures on Dante and the *Inferno,* but he never completed them.

Boccaccio died on December 21, 1375. The *Decameron* has been in print almost continually since 1370 and is available in dozens of languages.

See also: *Decameron*.

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Bogatyr/Bogatyri

(Russian)

A *bogatyr* is the Russian equivalent of an Arthurian knight. These knights, or *bogatyri,* are the fictional, or possibly fictionalized, heroes of the *bylini,* which are the Russian folk epic poems that originated in Kievan Russia between the tenth and twelfth centuries.

The bogatyri were valiant warriors associated with the court of Prince Vladimir of Kiev. Some were nobles, but others were commoners. Two of the most popular bogatyri were Dobrynya Nikitich, a nobleman hero who was sent by Prince Vladimir on diplomatic missions or to slay dragons, and Ilya Muromets, a peasant from Murom who was frequently involved in warfare against the enemies of Kievan Russia.

The bogatyri often possessed more than mere heroism or prowess with weapons. Some had extraordinary strength, and others were aided by disguises or magic weapons. Whatever their skills, the bogatyri set out from the court either on adventures or to protect Russia from its enemies. They always achieved their goals and returned victorious.

See also: Bylina/Bylini; Dobrynya Nikitich; Ilya Murometz/Ilya of Murom; Slavic Mythology.

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Boy Who Didn't Know Fear

A world folktale type, a tale of a boy who didn't know fear is known by various names and in different versions in almost every culture. It has been and still is popular throughout Europe and in the United States.

The basic theme of the story is of a heroic boy or young man who is almost mindlessly brave and literally does not know what fear is. The hero is overwhelmed by curiosity or a need to learn the unknown, and he sets out on a quest to find it. This tale goes by various names, such as "The Boy Who Wanted to Know What Fear Was" and "The Boy Who Couldn't Shudder."

As the boy sets out on his quest to learn about the nature of fear, he finds himself confronted by a variety of what should be truly frightening experiences. Some of his experiences, taken from various international folktales, include:

- Playing cards with the devil or a group of devils, either in an abandoned house or in a church.
- Staying all night in a cemetery or haunted house and watching severed limbs reassemble themselves into a dead man.
- Stealing a ghost's clothes.
- Defeating a pack of monster cats.
- Letting a barber-ghost shave him.
- Trimming the devil's nails.

But the boy fails in all his attempts to learn fear. He defeats the monsters and devils in almost casual heroic fashion.

Finally, the young man's impatient girlfriend or wife tires of hearing him complain about never knowing fear. So she slips fish or eels down his neck or drops ice water on him while he sleeps. He wakes up with a shivering

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start. Now, he knows what the shuddering of fear is!

Versions of this tale have been collected in Europe, Scandinavia, Britain, Russia, and the United States.

See also: Tale Types.

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Bremen Town Musicians

(German)

The familiar story of the Bremen Town Musicians tells of four aging animals that left their masters after being mistreated. The four formed a successful partnership. The popularity of this tale may be attributed to the themes of seemingly unwanted beings finding a place and the elderly showing that they are not useless.

The most common version of the tale is from the Brothers Grimm, in their work titled *Household Tales,* but the basic story can be found in other versions from around the world. The following is a basic summary of the Grimms' version.

Four unwanted, aging animals—a donkey, a hound, a cat, and a rooster—headed to the village of Bremen, where they planned to make a new life for themselves as musicians. They came upon a well-lighted house that had been taken over by robbers who had set a fine table for themselves. The animals decided that this house would be perfect for them and decided to sing for the robbers.

The donkey placed his forefeet on the window ledge, the hound jumped on the donkey's back, the cat climbed on the dog, and the cock perched on the head of the cat. Once they were in position, the four began their performance. The donkey brayed, the hound barked, the cat meowed, and the cock crowed.

The robbers jumped up in horror at the sudden din, certain that the noise was supernatural, and fled into the forest. The four musicians ate the feast that had been left behind and settled down for the night. Tired from their long walk, they soon fell asleep.

Meanwhile, the leader of the thieves sent one of the men back to investigate. The thief tiptoed into the house and mistook the cat's glowing eyes for live coals. As the man held a match to the cat's face to light it, the startled cat leapt at him, spitting and scratching. The thief tried to flee, tripped over the dog, and was bitten. The awakened donkey kicked the man, and the startled rooster crowed.

The thief raced back to his leader and cried, "There's a monstrous witch in that house! She spat on me and scratched my face with her long claws. By the door stands a man with a knife who stabbed me in the leg! In the yard, there lies another monster who beat me with a wooden club. And on the roof sits the judge who called out, 'Bring the rogue here to me!' So I got away as well as I could."

After this, the robbers never again dared to enter the house. This suited the four musicians of Bremen so well that they lived there happily ever after.

There are other versions of this tale type from France, several Arabic-speaking lands, England, the United States, Norway, China, and others. The types of animals involved vary, but the scaring off of the robbers and subsequent settling at the house remain constant.

See also: Tale Types.

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Bridges

Bridges serve a basic function in the world. They allow traffic to pass over obstacles, such as rivers or roads. But bridges also have symbolic uses.

Moon bridges in Chinese or Japanese gardens, for example, were originally designed to be utilitarian. Their high arches allowed canal boats and barges to pass underneath. Over time, the design became a symbol of the rising Moon.

Bridges sometimes are constructed over artificial waterways, such as at the approach to a royal palace. These bridges symbolize a passage to the proper state of mind, or from the mundane to the grand. The Forbidden City in Beijing, China, has bridges like this, including one that was used only by the emperor and empress.

Mythic Bridges of the West

Bridges also are found throughout world myths and folklore. These bridges lead from mortal realms to the dominions of the dead or of the gods.

In Norse mythology, the bridge called Bifrost separates Midgard, the mortal realm, from Asgard, the home of the gods. Bifrost was made of rainbow colors with magic and great skill by the Aesir, the principal race of gods, and it is incredibly strong. Since it provides the only way to enter Asgard, Bifrost is closely guarded by Heimdall, who serves as watchman to the gods. During Ragnarok, which is the end of the world in Norse mythology, this rainbow bridge would collapse. Another Norse bridge was the Gjallar Brú, the gold-roofed "echoing bridge" over the River Gjoll that led to Hel's land of the dead.

Some North American myths, including those believed by the peoples of the Great Plains, include stories of a bridge between the living and dead. This bridge shakes so fiercely that no living person can cross it.

In Teutonic and Celtic folklore, there is a tale type that involves a bridge that was built

A lovely moon bridge, in typical Chinese and Japanese style, imitates the arch of the full moon. In stories, bridges may link parts of the real world or join worlds of myth. *(Harald Sund/Photographer's Choice/Getty Images)*

by the devil or another supernatural being. The keeper of the bridge demanded possession of the first living thing to cross the bridge. The devil is always cheated in these tales by being offered an animal rather than a human.

In South America, the Inca believed that to reach Hanan Pacha, the heavenly realm, the souls of the dead must cross a bridge woven from hairs. Only good souls could cross it safely.

Eastern Traditions

In Zoroastrian myth, the dead must cross the Cinvat, or Separation Bridge. For the righteous, the bridge seems wide, but for the wicked, it appears to be as thin as a razor's edge. In Islamic tradition, the bridge to paradise, Al-Sirat, is narrower than spider's silk and sharper than a sword. Only the good pass over it, while the wicked fall down to hell.

In the Altai region of southern Siberia, the underworld realm of the perilous Erlik Khan is reachable only by a bridge that is as narrow as a hair. The sea below the bridge is full of the bones of shamans who failed to cross it.

In Malaysia, the Semang people tell of a bridge called Balan Bacham. This bridge reaches over the ocean to Belet, the island afterworld. It is guarded so that only the good

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souls may cross over it. Its guardian is named Mampes. In the beliefs of the Sakai people, also of Malaysia, a bridge called Menteg spans a cauldron of boiling water. Those who are wicked are unable to cross safely.

Japanese mythology includes a floating bridge that leads from Earth to heaven. It belongs to Uzume, goddess of dance, and is guarded by her husband, god of pathways.

Bridges in Modern Tales

The destruction of a bridge is often an important plot point in modern fiction and motion pictures. Thornton Wilder's novel *The Bridge of San Luis Rey,* centers on the collapse of a bridge. Pierre Boulle's novel *Le Pont de la Rivière Kwai,* was made into a memorable film in 1957, called *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. This story involves a bridge that is destroyed during World War II.

See also: Asgard.

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Broadside Ballads

In the sixteenth century, typesetters began to print and sell folk songs on individual sheets of paper, a practice that quickly became common throughout Western Europe and, a little over a century later, in the Americas. A broadside is anything printed on only one side of a sheet, from handouts to advertisements, and so these printed folk songs quickly became known as broadside ballads or, simply, broadsides.

The earliest examples of broadside ballads did not include the music, only a note mentioning the title of the familiar tune to which the words could be sung. One of the earliest English examples, a Robin Hood ballad called "A Lytel Geste of Robyne Hood," dates to the first decade of the sixteenth century. By 1520, broadside ballads had become so popular that a bookseller in Oxford sold nearly 200 of them.

By 1556, English law stated that all printers had to be licensed through the Stationers' Company in London. In 1557, the Stationers' Company began a copyright service that required legal registration of printed ballads at 4 pence each. For the length of time that this registration was in force, through 1709, the company's records reveal more than 3,000 entries.

Broadside ballads could be purchased not only from booksellers but from traveling peddlers and at market stalls. As a result, they were also known as stall ballads. Many of the broadsides were illustrated with woodcuts and pinned up on walls. Once a song was learned, it could be pasted over with a new broadside.

Broadside ballads also were used for advertisements, as souvenirs, and as decorations in homes and pubs. In his book *The Compleat Angler* (1653), Izaak Walton described "an honest ale-house, where we shall find a cleanly room, lavender in the windows, and twenty ballads stuck about the wall."

After their popularity waned in the eighteenth century, broadsides made a brief return to fame during the nineteenth century. They faded into obscurity at the turn of the twentieth century, when they were replaced by professionally printed sheet music and newspapers.

See also: Ballads; Chapbooks.

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Brothers Grimm

The German scholars Jacob (1785–1863) and Wilhelm (1786–1859) Grimm are best known for their influential fairy-tale collections. The brothers also contributed to the fields of philology, linguistics, history, ethnology, religion, jurisprudence, lexicography, and literary criticism.

The Grimm brothers were born in rural Hanau, Germany. Their family moved to Steinau in 1791 when their father, Philipp Wilhelm Grimm, was appointed magistrate. Philipp died suddenly in 1796, and in 1798 Jacob and Wilhelm went to live with their maternal aunt in Cassel, where they attended school. Both boys went on to study law at the University of Marburg; Jacob in 1802 and Wilhelm in 1803. It was there that they both became interested in German literature and folklore. In 1806, the brothers began to collect folktales.

The folktales, though, were not collected directly from the common folk, but rather from educated friends and neighbors who enjoyed sharing the tales they had heard. One of the brothers' best contributors, Henriette Dorothea (Dortchen) Wild, would become Wilhelm's wife. The brothers also edited and even rewrote many of the tales. In the original version of "Hansel and Gretel," for example, it was the mother who abandoned her children. The brothers replaced this character with a cruel stepmother.

On the death of their mother, Dorothea Grimm, in 1808 at the age of fifty-two, Jacob assumed financial responsibility for his sister and four younger brothers, and he took a librarian position at Cassel. Wilhelm soon joined him. In 1829, they accepted positions at the University of Göttingen as librarians and professors, followed by professorial appointments at the University of Berlin in 1842.

The Grimms wrote profusely throughout their academic careers, both together and individually. *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*Children's and Household Tales*), which contained eighty-six tales, was first published in 1812. A second, enlarged volume, containing seventy additional tales, followed in 1815, and a third annotated volume was published in 1822. The sixth and final version to be published in their lifetime contained 200 numbered stories and a further ten children's legends. (The standard abbreviation for the tales in the collection is KHM.) Other works included two volumes of *Deutsche Sagen* (*German Legends*), published in 1816 and 1818, and Jacob's extensive *Deutsche Mythologie* (*German Mythology*), published in 1855.

The Grimms were highly respected scholars, and they corresponded with leading intellectuals throughout Europe. Their ideas about a systematic, scholarly approach to folk narratives invigorated collectors in other countries and inspired fieldwork in the Netherlands, Denmark, Italy, and Scotland.

Jacob Ludwig Karl Grimm (left) and Wilhelm Carl Grimm are among the best-known folklorists and writers of fairy tales. This photograph was taken sometime around 1835. *(Time & Life Pictures/Stringer/Getty Images)*

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Though the brothers were by no means the first to publish fairy tales, their lives and work have prompted hundreds of books and articles in several languages, including fairy-tale editions, biographies, commentaries, and critiques. Scholars and enthusiasts alike have offered analyses of the Grimms' scholarship and methodology, as well as literary and psychoanalytical interpretations of the texts they collected.

The brothers' contribution to folkloristics remains a paradox, for while they could not resist improving and altering the tales that they collected, their works are still in as much demand as the standard versions. Jacob and Wilhelm have become part of folklore and are inseparable as the Brothers Grimm.

Jacob retired from his university position in 1848, Wilhelm retired from his position in 1853. The brothers dedicated their remaining years to pursuing private studies and research.

On December 16, 1859, Wilhelm passed away at the age of seventy-three; he was survived by his brother. Jacob died on September 20, 1863, at the age of seventy-eight.

Maria Teresa Agozzino

See also: German Storytelling; Hansel and Gretel.

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Brownies

(British)

Brownies are small fairylike beings from British and Scottish folklore that live in human dwellings and help out with household tasks.

Traditionally brownies are described as hairy and rather homely, with flat faces and winning smiles that make up for their ugliness. They are generally good-natured and can make themselves invisible, although very young children sometimes can see them. Brownies typically work only at night and do not want to be seen as they tidy up, mend clothing, and do any other chores necessary to help "their" humans.

Brownies will accept food, particularly milk or cream, but will abandon a house if someone says within their hearing that the gifts are payment. They will definitely flee any home in which they are mistreated or, more mysteriously, if they are offered gifts of clothing.

Brownies are said to be protective of their chosen families. They may become so attached to them that they move wherever the family moves.

In Wales, brownies are called the *bwca,* or *pwca*. These helpful creatures are willing to perform small labors, such as churning butter, in exchange for a bowl of cream. But if mistreated, a bwca will pound the walls, throw small objects, pinch sleeping people, and make life generally unpleasant. A parallel to the British brownie appears in the Grimm Brothers' tale "The Shoemaker and the Elves."

In the early twentieth century, brownies were popularized in the humorous cartoons accompanied by verse that were created by Canadian artist and author Palmer Cox. It is after these brownies that the junior branch of the Girl Guides in Britain and Girl Scouts in the United States get their names.

More recently, when someone does a good deed, he or she is said to earn so-called brownie

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points, though this more likely refers to the reward system of the Girl Scouts and Girl Guides than to the brownies of folklore. In addition, the Cleveland Browns football team used a brownie as its mascot from 1946 until the mid-1960s, and again after 1999.

The house elves featured in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series are similar to folklore brownies in their behavior, especially when the act of giving a brownie a gift of clothing sets a brownie free from servitude.

See also: Domovoi/Domovois; Pixies; Tomte/Tomten/Tomtar; *Retelling: The Cauld Lad of Hilton.*

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Brunhilde/Brynhild/ Brunnehilde

(Norse)

The warrior woman called Brunhilde is the epitome of a scorned woman who takes terrible revenge. In the Norse myths, she is one of the Valkyrie, the minor female deities, but in German myth she is human.

In Norse mythology, her name is spelled Brynhild, most notably in the Icelandic medieval *Volsunga* saga. She was one of the god Odin's nine daughters, but she defied her father and was subsequently imprisoned in a ring of fire. She was to remain there until a brave hero rescued her.

That hero was Sigurd, called Siegfried in the German version. He braved the fire, woke Brunhilde from her charmed sleep, fell in love with her, and gave her a ring. What the couple did not know was that this ring had been made from stolen gold and was therefore cursed. When Brunhilde later learned that Sigurd had betrayed her with another woman, Gudrun, she sought revenge. Unaware that Sigurd had been bewitched into wedding Gudrun, Brunhilde facilitated his murder. Upon learning the truth, Brunhilde killed herself.

In the German sagas, in particular the *Nibelungenlied* (*Song of the Nibelungs*), Brunhilde has a much larger role. She was a tragic heroine, the warrior queen of Iceland whom Siegfried defeated in combat and won for his brother-in-law, Gunther. Brunhilde hated Siegfried and plotted his death at the hands of Gunther's henchman, Hagen.

Her story may be based in part on the life of Queen Brunhild, who ruled in the late sixth and early seventh centuries. The historical Brunhild was queen of a Frankish kingdom that is now part of France and Germany. She is said to have fought a bloody war to avenge her sister's murder and then ruled as regent after the death of her husband.

The fictional Germanic Brunhilde's story was referenced by nineteenth-century German poet and playwright Emanuel von Geibel, whose play *Brunhild* first appeared in 1858. Richard Wagner's series of mythic operas known as the Ring Cycle was inspired by both the Germanic and Norse versions of this story. But Wagner transformed it back into a fully mythic, rather than pseudo-historic, epic. In Wagner's opera, Brunhilde's suicide not only ends the story of love and betrayal, but also brings down the corrupt world of the gods and marks the beginning of a new, untainted world.

See also: Norse Mythology; Odin/Odhinn; Valkyries.

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Bucephalus

(Greek)

One of the most famous horses in history is Alexander the Great's stallion, Bucephalus.

Little is known about Bucephalus's breeding, or even his appearance, except that he was dark in color. He may have come from mixed stock—Oriental and Thracian—and might even have had some Arab blood. Bucephalus probably was raised on the rich grass of Thessaly, where Philip of Macedon, Alexander's father, pastured his large herds of horses. The name *Bucephalus* means "ox head," which may have meant that he had a broad forehead. It also may have been a reference to his brand, since brands in the shape of ox heads were in use in Alexander's time.

The story of Alexander taming Bucephalus was first told in Plutarch's *Life of Alexander.* King Philip was presented with the horse when Bucephalus was a colt. The steed was already so spectacular that comparisons had been made to Pegasus, the winged horse of Greek myth. A prophecy by the Delphic oracle added that whoever was able to ride Bucephalus would become king of the world.

With this incentive, Philip ordered his stablemen to attempt to ride the horse—but Bucephalus was so wild that he threw each of them to the ground. The disappointed Philip ordered that the horse be sent away. But the young Alexander stopped his father. He said that a horse should not be blamed for poor riders, and that he could ride Bucephalus. Philip challenged him to do so.

Alexander had realized that it was the horse's shadow that had alarmed Bucephalus. So Alexander soothed the horse and turned him away from his shadow. Alexander was then able to ride him with no trouble. Philip was so astonished by his son's feat that he announced that Alexander was to find a kingdom that was worthy of him. He felt that their land of Macedon was clearly far too small.

From that time forward, Alexander took Bucephalus with him on all of his campaigns. When Bucephalus died, Alexander named a city after him. Scholars believe that the city of Bucephalas once stood in what is now Pakistan.

See also: Animal Helper and Grateful Animal.

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Bull of Heaven

(Sumerian and Babylonian)

The Bull of Heaven in both Sumerian and Babylonian tradition was a killer beast under the control of the sky god, An or Anu. A myth about the bull is preserved in a Sumerian composition within the *Epic of Gilgamesh.* This ancient text about the hero Gilgamesh dates to the third century B.C.E. A version of *The Bull of Heaven* is in a later Babylonian work as well, also called the *Epic of Gilgamesh.*

The Sumerian work, called *Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven,* opens with a paean of praise for the hero Gilgamesh. Inanna, the principal female Sumerian deity, saw Gilgamesh and became infatuated. She entreated him to remain with her as a lover.

Gilgamesh informed his mother, Ninsun, that he was trapped and that the goddess would not let him return to his city to resume his royal duties as a judge in the E-ana temple. Ninsun advised her son to reject the goddess's amorous advances, saying that he should not allow her allure to distract him, for she would rob him of his powers.

Gilgamesh Battles the Bull

Gilgamesh rejected Inanna, saying that he would not allow her to distract him from his

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royal duties. Inanna was enraged. She demanded of her father, the god An, that he give her the monster Bull of Heaven to attack and kill Gilgamesh. An replied that the bull was too dangerous to be let loose: It would kill innocent people and drink their blood. Inanna wept and then let loose a terrifying scream in order to get her way. The scream was so intense that all humanity cowered in fear. Reluctantly, An gave in and granted his daughter the use of the bull.

The bull attacked the city of Uruk, Gilgamesh's hometown. It ate all the vegetation, stripped bare the fields, and crushed the city's date palms. Gilgamesh prepared to battle the bull, arming himself with a mighty dagger and his bronze battle-axe.

Gilgamesh told his mother that if he was able to slay the monster, he would dismember it, throw its carcass into an alley, place its entrails in the main thoroughfare, give its hide to the tanner, and present its meat to the city's orphans. Its horns, he said contemptuously, would be returned to Inanna to be used as containers for oil in her temple.

As the goddess watched from the top of her temple wall, Gilgamesh, with the aid of his servant Enkidu, attacked the bull. Gilgamesh stood before it as Enkidu seized it by the tail. Gilgamesh hit the bull on the head with his axe, and the bull collapsed and died.

Gilgamesh took out his knife and dismembered the monster. As the hero cut into the bull, Inanna fled. Gilgamesh shouted after her in anger that, given the chance, he would have killed her as well. Then Gilgamesh, just as he had promised, cut apart the monster, gave its meat to the orphans, and presented its two horns to be used in the temple as vessels for oil.

The Babylonian Epic

In the Babylonian variant of the story, after Gilgamesh killed the giant guardian of the Cedar Forest, he washed and put on clean clothes. Ishtar, the Babylonian form of Inanna, upon seeing his beauty, became aroused. She proposed marriage, offering him wealth and grandeur.

Gilgamesh rejected her advances. He scorned her and threw back at her a list of her past lovers, all of whom she had discarded after her passion had cooled. Ishtar became furious and rushed off in tears to seek counsel from her father, Anu, and her mother, Antum.

Ishtar's kindly father, Anu, replied that her behavior was inappropriate. But the goddess was still enraged and implored her father to give her control over the Bull of Heaven so that she could seek revenge for Gilgamesh's insults. Her pleading was successful. Anu gave her use of the bull, which she proceeded to lead toward Uruk, Gilgamesh's home.

When they came to Uruk, the bull went on a rampage. It gulped up enormous amounts of water, which caused the marshes, groves, and reed beds to go dry. It also drank from the Euphrates River and made its water level drop by seven cubits. With its snorts, it opened up great pits in the ground, and hundreds of Uruk's youth fell in.

Finally, Enkidu, Gilgamesh's companion, who had fallen into one of the pits, jumped up and seized the bull by its horns. Angered, the bull spewed foam in Enkidu's face and swished dung at him with the tuft of its tail. Enkidu released the bull's horns and circled behind the bull, grabbing its tail. Gilgamesh, dagger in hand, stabbed the bull in the neck behind its horns.

The great monster died, and the two heroes ripped out its heart. Enkidu then tore off the bull's haunch and flung it at the goddess, saying that he would do the same to her. Gilgamesh finally took the bull's horns, molded from precious lapis stone, and hung them up in his bedchamber.

The episode ends with a parade of triumph in honor of Gilgamesh and Enkidu.

Ira Spar

See also: Gilgamesh.

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Bunyips

(Australian Aboriginal)

Bunyips are spirits or creatures found in Australian aboriginal folklore.

Descriptions of these beings vary from story to story. Some tales mention flippers or tusks, scales, or a hairy tail.

But all tales agree that bunyips are evil spirits that live in water. Most often they are described as inhabiting creeks, swamps, or billabongs, the pools or water holes that form near rivers during Australia's wet season.

Bunyips take delight in terrifying people at night with their horrible roar. Some of the darker stories claim that bunyips slip from the water at night and hunt down women and children. Many white settlers have claimed to have seen bunyips.

Various aboriginal clans have given local names to bunyips, such as Yaa-loo, Dongu, Kine Pratie, and Wowee-wowee. Bunyips also feature prominently in Australian children's literature, and the word *bunyip* has taken on the meaning of "imposter" in modern-day Australian slang.

See also: Aboriginal Mythology.

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Bylina/Bylini

(Russian)

A *bylina* is a Russian folk epic ballad about one or more of the heroes in Russian lore.

The earliest *bylini* were composed in the tenth century. The tradition was exclusively oral until the nineteenth century, when professional folklorists discovered that performers of the bylini were living by the shore of the White Sea. It was those folklorists who gave the folk epics the name *bylina,* a word that comes from the past tense in Russian of the verb "to be." In English, the word can be roughly translated to mean "something that was."

The singers that the researchers recorded recited the bylini in a singsong, monotonous voice without any instrumental accompaniment. Bylini singers in the Middle Ages, however, were generally *skaziteli,* or minstrels, who sometimes accompanied themselves with *gusli,* or small zithers.

Most of the bylini center around Russian folk heroes and can be classified into three groups. The stories of the Kievan cycle tell of the *bogatyri,* who were the knights of Prince Vladimir of Kiev. The second group, the Novgorod cycle, is concerned with the city of Novgorod. And a final group of epics is comprised of a general mythic or supernatural series of bylini. One well-known example of the latter is the epic of Vol'ka the magician, also known as Mikula Selyaninovich, a peasant hero who is a thinly veiled pagan earth god.

Many of the bylini, including that of Vol'ka, contain an intriguing mix of pagan and Christian elements. All types of bylini are rich sources of Russian folklore.

See also: Ballads; Bogatyr/Bogatyri; Kievan Cycle.

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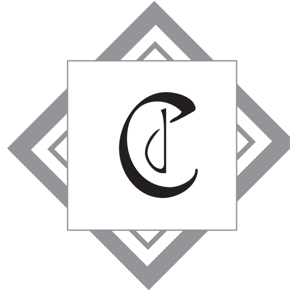

Camp Stories

At summer camp, counselors and older children often initiate new campers by telling scary stories about maniacs, monsters, ghosts, and wild animals. Sitting around a campfire, children learn to handle the stress of being far from home as they listen to these legends. Some of the best-known camp stories describe a menacing figure that returns cyclically to the place where a tragic event once took place.

Maniacs, Monsters, and Ghosts

Campers in upstate New York have been terrified by stories of the Cropsey Maniac, who lost his wife and children in a fire accidentally set by campers. Counselors say he returns each year to kill at least one camper in retribution for his tragic loss. At one camp in the Catskill Mountains, all of the children in one bunkhouse chose not to return to camp because of their dread of Cropsey.

Other notorious frightening figures are monsters that inhabit the area surrounding a camp. For instance, the large, hairy Boondocks Monster is said to live near Camp Wapehani in Indiana.

Stories of frightening beings of various sorts sometimes migrate. The story of Ralph and Rudy, for example, traveled from a riding camp in Kentucky to a camp for disadvantaged youths near Cleveland, Ohio. Ralph, a drunken wild man, is said to have decapitated his brother Rudy and to continue to menace campers and counselor.

Ghost stories are also popular at camp. In Woodland Park, Colorado, teenagers at a church camp have made pilgrimages to the grave of Chas McGee, where a ghostly light hovers over his gravestone. According to the camp's legends, this light will remain until Chas finds the man who murdered him.

Scout Tales

Camp legends created by and told about Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts have been well documented. Encounters with bears, ghosts, and other uncanny presences are among the scouts' favored subjects. The telling of these tales is part of the campfire ritual.

Camp storytelling varies according to the camp's type and the age of the children, but the main characters—maniacs, monsters, ghosts, and wild animals—are consistent. Some camps, such as Camp Winona in Maine, have cherished the same scary story for many decades. This adherence to unnerving subject matter shows the importance of helping children come to terms with fear during an interlude in the woods, far from home.

Elizabeth Tucker

See also: Campfire Storytelling.

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Campfire Storytelling

Telling stories around a campfire is possibly one of the oldest forms of storytelling. This setting has an impact that is difficult to achieve in more "civilized" surroundings. If the campsite is in the middle of dark woods or wilderness, the listeners' imaginations add scary elements that would not be conjured up in the middle of a well-lit room.

A campfire story's type, length, and complexity are determined by what is appropriate for the age of the listeners. Adults generally have more patience than children, so stories can be longer and more involved. Adults also can handle stories that are more violent, frightening, or graphic than those meant for children.

It is important for the storyteller to be well prepared when performing under these circumstances, since it is impossible to refer to written notes by a campfire's unsteady light. It is also wise to rehearse the story in advance, determining how long the telling will take. Stories should not exceed ten minutes in length and repetitive phrases should be utilized to draw the listeners into the story, particularly children.

Gestures may or may not be seen clearly by the audience, but wise storytellers will figure out how to let the firelight wash over them in the spookiest fashion. Flashlights are also useful tools—a flashlight shining directly up at a storyteller's face has an eerie effect.

Some popular types of stories that are told around campfires include funny stories, shaggy-dog tales, tall tales, urban legends, and the infamous "gotcha" tales. The latter category includes spooky classics such as "The Golden Arm." This story tells of a vengeful ghost (or monster, or devil) that was hunting for a relic stolen from him by a feckless human. The teller frequently repeats a catch-phrase question, such as, "Who has my golden arm?" until the listeners are on the edges of their seats. Then, at the climax of the story, the raconteur points without warning at someone in the audience and shouts, "You do!" This is guaranteed to bring screams.

Urban legends are also told around campfires. These are scary, realistic tales, such as "The Hook" and "The Vanishing Hitchhiker." These often are familiar to listeners, but most still will enjoy these old favorites, particularly if the teller can add a new twist.

See also: Ghosts and Hauntings.

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Canterbury Tales, The

(English)

The Canterbury Tales is a group of poems written by Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343–1400) that are among the first compositions written in English. They relate stories told by a group of pilgrims on their way to Canterbury to visit the shrine of Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury between 1162 and 1170 C.E. Scholars believe that Chaucer began writing the stories that make up *The Canterbury Tales* in 1387.

Chaucer's decision to write in Middle English rather than Latin or French was a bold step. French had been the official court language and predominant culture of England since the Norman invasion of 1066. It was not until 1363 that Parliament was convened in

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A fifteenth-century manuscript page from an illustrated version of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* shows the pilgrims setting out on their journey. *(Image Select/Art Resource, NY)*

English for the first time. The English language of this period was divided into at least five mutually unintelligible dialects. Chaucer chose to use the London dialect in his work. This dialect eventually became Modern English, which is why much of Chaucer's vocabulary is familiar to modern readers.

Chaucer's works were designed to be read aloud, most likely in a court setting. For these works, Chaucer decided upon a pentameter, a poetic line with five stresses. It is likely that this was the first time anyone had used this meter in English poetry. Chaucer also invented the heroic couplet, which is a rhyming pentameter in which the rhyme scheme is *aa, bb, cc,* and so on.

The framework for *The Canterbury Tales* is a pilgrimage to Canterbury. During this trip, a group of twenty-nine pilgrims have a storytelling contest. Each person tells two stories on the way to Canterbury and two on the way back. The person whose story is considered the best is to be treated to dinner by the rest of the pilgrims. However, because Chaucer wrote only twenty-four stories, not all of the characters relate a tale.

Pilgrimages were common during the fourteenth century, even for people who were not particularly religious. Such journeys were a type of vacation, a way to escape everyday life. So it is not surprising that some of Chaucer's characters were not going to Canterbury for pious reasons and that their stories often reflect worldly rather than religious views and opinions. The tales contain everything from themes of courtly love to satirical commentaries on church and secular life.

Chaucer never completed *The Canterbury Tales*. He originally planned for at least 116 stories, in addition to the prologue, but worked on only twenty-four before his death. Some of the tales are not complete. Chaucer left no instructions regarding which order the tales should follow, so it was left for later scholars to decide on an arrangement.

See also: Chaucer, Geoffrey.

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Cat-and-Mouse Tales

Stories about the rivalry between a cat and a mouse are popular throughout the world. They exist in every format, from folktales to television cartoons.

In many of the stories, the mouse is the hero, or at least the winner, of the various combats. This may symbolize the satisfaction most people feel in seeing the "little guy" win

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against impossible odds. In other stories, the cat wins, providing a proper ending for those who dislike mice.

The theme is featured in two of Aesop's fables. In "Belling the Cat," a group of mice decides to protect themselves by putting a warning bell around a cat's neck, but none of them has the nerve to do the dangerous deed. In "The Cat and the Mice," the cat pretends to be dead, but the mice refuse to be tricked.

In a German tale that was collected by the Brothers Grimm as "The Cat and the Mouse in Partnership," a cat and mouse share a house. The cat's greed eventually leads him to eat all the food—and the mouse as well. A similar tale is told in China.

In a Russian tale, the cat looks for a friend. He turns down the dog, because he can only bark, and rejects the hen, because she can only cluck. The cat likes the mouse's squeak, but the mouse wisely says they cannot be friends, because the cat will eat him.

In two Tibetan tales, the cat tries in vain to deceive the wily mice, in both versions by pretending to be a penitent. A similar tale, with the cat pretending to be a holy man, comes from Palestine.

In modern times, cartoon characters such as Mighty Mouse become supermice, often outwitting villainous cats. This concept was taken to extremes in the Warner Brothers' cartoon television program of the 1990s *Pinky and the Brain,* which followed the adventures of two genetically altered laboratory mice, who even plotted to take over the world. The beloved cartoon *Tom and Jerry* remains a classic example of the never-ending battle between cat and mouse.

This theme is so familiar that it has entered the English language as the phrase "a cat-and-mouse game," referring to a situation full of suspense.

See also: Cats; Mice; Tale Types.

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Catoblepas

(Roman)

The *catoblepas* is described in Roman texts from the first century C.E. as an imaginary animal that looks something like a bull or bison with a large, heavy head and a long, shaggy mane. These creatures are also listed in medieval bestiaries, the encyclopedic collections of both real and imaginary animals.

The weight of its massive head is what kept the catoblepas from being able to look up with its bloodshot, red eyes. Its name meant "that which looks downward" in Greek. Once it was able to lift its head, however, the catoblepas's glance was deadly. Since it ate mostly poisonous plants, its breath was also lethal.

The Roman historian and naturalist Pliny the Elder mentioned the creature in his *Natural History.* Pliny claimed that the home range of the catoblepas was near a spring in Ethiopia that was the source of the Nile River. It was Pliny who first claimed that the gaze of the catoblepas was deadly.

The writings of another Roman author, Claudius Aelianus, provide a fuller description of the catoblepas than Pliny's work. In *On the Nature of Animals,* Aelianus claimed that the creature was about the size of a domestic bull, with a heavy mane, narrow, bloodshot or red eyes, and shaggy eyebrows. In Aelianus's description, the animal's gaze was not lethal. It was in this account that the catoblepas was described to have poisoned breath.

Descriptions of the catoblepas make it sound either like a gnu, the large African antelope with a head resembling that of an ox, or a North American bison. There are North

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American tribal tales about why the bison never looks up, most of which center on a curse placed on it by the trickster hero Coyote. But the comparison ends there. Neither gnus nor bison possess the poisonous glance or breath of the catoblepas.

See also: Bestiary.

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Cats

There are many folktales, myths, and superstitions connected to cats. This may be because domestic cats have lived closely with humans for many centuries and yet remain mysterious.

Cats may have first been considered sacred in ancient Egypt. Bastet, or Bast, a protective and nurturing feline deity, was pictured with a cat's head. To deliberately kill a cat in Egypt was considered a deadly offense.

Jewish and Islamic Traditions

The usefulness of the cat as a hunter of rodents is explained in Jewish folklore. Aboard the ark, Noah found that there was a problem with the mice, which bred so swiftly they soon were a genuine plague. When Noah prayed for help, he was instructed to hit the sleeping male lion on the nose. Noah did, and from the lion's sneeze came the first two cats. This ended the problem with the mice.

In Islamic tradition, cats are revered because a tabby cat once fell asleep on the Prophet Muhammad's sleeve. Rather than disturb the cat, he cut off the sleeve. This same cat once had warned Muhammad of danger. The M-shaped marking on the foreheads of some tabby cats is said to be the mark of Muhammad's blessing.

Cats in Christian Lore

Only a few examples in Christianity portray cats in a positive light. The M-shaped marking on a tabby's face is said to have been left in blessing by the Virgin Mary, either for having curled up next to the infant Jesus to keep him warm or for killing a poisonous snake.

In general, Christian lore has not been kind to cats. This was particularly true during the Middle Ages, when it was believed the cat was created by the devil. All cats—and especially black ones—were considered to be creatures of evil and companions to witches. Hundreds, possibly thousands, of cats were killed during the twelfth through fourteenth centuries.

One reason that black cats in particular are considered to be evil may come from Norse mythology. Freya, the goddess of fertility and guardian of the apples of youth, was said to have a chariot pulled by black cats. Such pagan beliefs were considered evil once Christianity took hold in Scandinavia, so the servants of the pagan gods became servants of evil. The modern belief that black cats are unlucky is derived from that time of medieval dread.

Cats in Asia

Chinese tales claim that cats were once in charge of the world and had the power of speech. But the cats soon delegated this job to humans so that they could sit back and relax. This is an explanation for why cats seem to consider themselves superior to their human masters.

Li Shou was a Chinese cat deity that warded off evil spirits at night. The shadowy patches on the necks of Siamese cats are said to be the thumbprints of gods who picked up the cats to admire them.

Another Chinese folktale explains the many-colored coat of Birman cats. These cats were plain brown until one jumped on the body of a Burmese priest who had been slain by Thai invaders. The priest's spirit passed into the cat, and its body turned golden, while its head, tail, and legs remained brown. The cat's feet turned pure white because they had touched the holy man's skin.

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Superstitions

The aloof, and rather mysterious, manner of cats has led to the creation of many superstitions that sometimes conflict with one another:

- Dreaming of a white cat or seeing a white cat is lucky (United States).
- Black cats are lucky (England).
- A strange black cat on the doorstep or porch is lucky (Scotland).
- Black cats with any white hairs are lucky (France).
- Tortoiseshell cats are lucky (England and Japan).
- Blue cats are lucky (Russia).
- Calico cats are lucky (Canada).
- Ugly cats are lucky (China).
- Polydactyl (multitoed) cats are lucky (United States and Malaysia).
- If a black cat crosses your path, it brings bad luck (United States).
- If a black cat crosses your path, it means bad luck has missed you (England).
- Do not allow a cat in a room where private conversations are going on, because a cat is a gossip (Netherlands).
- A sneezing cat is good luck (Italy).
- A beckoning cat is good luck (Japan).
- If a cat washes behind its ears, it will rain (England).
- Pour water on a cat, and it will bring rain (Indonesia).
- If a cat enters a house, it brings good luck (Northern Europe and Russia).
- If a black cat jumps on a sickbed, the sick person will die (Germany).
- If a cat jumps over a corpse, the corpse becomes a vampire (Romania).
- A cat always lands on its feet (United States).
- A cat has nine lives (United States).

Cats are often used in stories as anthropomorphic characters, taking on the characteristics of humans. One of the most familiar of these stories is the French folktale "Puss in Boots" in which the main character is both a cat and a perfect cavalier.

Cats remain popular pets in the West and are still viewed as mysterious creatures—aloof, independent, and capable of hearing things beyond the human range. They probably will remain mysterious to us as long as we share our homes with them.

See also: Bastet/Bast; Cat-and-Mouse Tales; Mice; Puss in Boots; *Retelling: Dick Whittington and His Cat.*

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Centaurs

(Greek)

In Greek mythology, centaurs were beings that were half human and half horse. The earliest images of centaurs have human bodies with the horses' bodies and rear legs growing from their backs. But the classic picture of a centaur is of a being with a human torso and a horse's body.

Centaurs were said to live on Mount Pelion in Thessaly, in northern Greece. According to one myth, they were the children of Ixion, king of Thessaly, and a cloud. Ixion had wanted Hera as his mate, but Zeus tricked him by transforming a cloud into Hera's shape.

Centaur society is portrayed in Greek mythology as more primitive than that of the Greeks. Centaurs had no refined weapons and used branches or rocks instead. They also had no resistance to alcohol. In the story of the wedding of Pirithous, king of the Lapiths,

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the centaur guests got drunk, attacked the female guests, and tried to carry off the bride, sparking a bloody battle. Another story tells of the brutal centaur Nessos, who tried to rape Deianira, wife of Hercules. Nessos gave Deianira the poison that would eventually kill Hercules.

Greek mythology also portrays a famous civilized and learned centaur, Chiron, who raised the young heroes Jason and Achilles. Chiron was said to be immortal. But, when wounded by a poison arrow and in terrible pain, Chiron was granted mortality by a merciful Zeus so that he could die. Another version of the myth claims that Chiron traded his life for that of Prometheus and was slain by an arrow from Hercules. Chiron may not have been considered to be a true centaur by the ancient Greeks, since it was said that he was the offspring of the god Cronos and the nymph Philyra.

A romanticized bronze statue from Hadrian's villa in Rome, Italy, portrays a centaur as a noble savage rather than as a wild being. The statue may be of Chiron, considered the only truly civilized centaur. *(Scala/Art Resource, NY)*

Overall, centaurs in modern fiction appear in a more favorable light, for example, in C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950–1956) or J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series (1997–2007).

See also: Chiron.

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Cerberus

(Greek)

In Greek mythology, Cerberus was the huge, fierce, three-headed watchdog that served the god Hades. The creature guarded the entrance to Hades, the underworld and land of the dead.

Cerberus was not born of mortal dogs but was the offspring of the giant Typhon and the monstrous Echidna, who was half woman and half snake. Although the eighth-century B.C.E. Greek poet Hesiod claimed that Cerberus had fifty heads, later descriptions of Cerberus are almost always of a three-headed dog. In some accounts he possesses a serpent's tail.

Cerberus allowed the newly deceased to enter the realm of the dead but permitted none of them to leave. Only a few living souls ever managed to sneak past the creature: Orpheus, the master musician, lulled Cerberus to sleep by playing his lyre. Heracles, the immensely strong hero and demigod, dragged Cerberus briefly to the land of the living as the last of his Twelve Labors. In Roman mythology, the Trojan Prince Aeneas bribed Cerberus with a drugged honey cake.

Cerberus also appeared in Dante Alighieri's fourteenth-century epic poem *The Divine Comedy,* in the section called *Inferno*. The three-headed dog is the guardian at Dante's third circle of hell, where he torments the gluttons.

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Portrayals of Cerberus have continued to the present day, in the television series *The Legendary Adventures of Hercules,* which aired from 1995 to 1999, and the 2005 low-budget horror movie *Cerberus*.

See also: Dogs.

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Champ/Champy

(North American)

Champ is the legendary monster that is said to inhabit Lake Champlain. Attempts to prove Champ's existence have been thwarted in part by the sheer size and depth of Lake Champlain. The lake, which is located between New York and Vermont and extends into Canada, is 109 miles (175 kilometers) long and up to 400 feet (122 meters) deep.

Some accounts state that the French explorer Samuel de Champlain was the first to sight Champ, in 1609. He described it as a serpent, "thick as a barrel with a head like a horse." Other accounts, however, place this sighting off the coast of the Saint Lawrence River estuary, miles from Lake Champlain.

In 1819, settlers near Port Henry, New York, reported a monster living in Lake Champlain. There were no more documented sightings until 1873, when members of a railroad crew were sure they had spotted the head of what looked like a huge serpent rising out of the water. That same year, farmers started reporting missing livestock, claiming that there were tracks that seemed to indicate that the animals had been dragged into the lake. Phineas Taylor Barnum, P.T. Barnum of circus fame, offered a reward to anyone who could catch or kill the "great Champlain serpent." No one took him up on the offer.

Reports in 1883 and 1899 described something that looked like an enormous snake with a finned body. The first photograph of what was claimed to be the long neck and head of some unknown creature was taken in 1977. Many people believe that this was actually a photograph of the fin of a rolling whale.

Joseph W. Zarzynski is the founder of the Lake Champlain Phenomenon Investigation in New York, which has been studying Champ for more than twenty years. Zarzynski has convinced the state and local governments that Champ should be a legally protected species.

If nothing else, the Champ phenomenon is good for the local tourism industry. There are a number of theories about Champ's identity, ranging from a dinosaur, such as a plesiosaur, to some sort of primitive whale, or simply a singularly large fish, such as a lake sturgeon. All theories have yet to be proven.

See also: Lake Monsters.

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Chapbooks

Chapbooks were inexpensive collections of popular literature that were published from the sixteenth through the nineteenth century. These small pamphlets with soft bindings were sold for as little as half an English penny by so-called chapmen, or traveling peddlers.

Storytellers and scholars value chapbooks because many of them contain folktales, such as "Cinderella" or "Jack the Giant Killer," ballads, and folk songs. Many selections were illustrated with rough woodcuts that are considered folk art in their own right. Other chapbooks contain such diverse works as almanacs, unofficial abridged versions of novels, such as Daniel DeFoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), and sensational

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"true" stories, similar to the scandal sheets of later days.

It was not until the eighteenth century that chapbooks for children were produced. Children's chapbooks are of interest to storytellers because they often include collections of rhymes or feature "histories" of nursery-rhyme characters such as Mother Hubbard.

The term *chapbook* is still in use, but the meaning has changed. A modern chapbook is usually a small but professionally published collection of short stories or poetry by multiple authors.

See also: Broadside Ballads.

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Charlemagne and His Peers

Charlemagne (742–814 C.E.) is the name given by later generations to Charles, king of the Franks, who became the first monarch of the Holy Roman Empire.

Like King Arthur of Britain, Charlemagne had a circle of favorite and trusted knights, known as his peers, around which a folk cycle is centered. While Charlemagne is a true historic figure, many of his peers, like Arthur's knights, are fictional. The twelve peers had free access to the palace and were true companions to the king.

Some of these characters and their stories are listed here:

- Roland, or Orlando, was Charlemagne's favorite nephew. Based on a real warrior, he was the hero of many works, among them the *Song of Roland* and two fifteenth-century Italian epics, *Orlando Inammorato* and *Orlando Furioso*.
- Rinaldo of Montalban, Roland's cousin, had his own story and also played a large role in both *Orlando Inammorato* and *Orlando Furioso*.
- Namo, Duke of Bavaria, served as a royal adviser to Charlemagne and appeared in the story of Huon of Bordeaux.
- Salomon, king of Brittany, was another historic figure. The real Salomon, however, probably was not connected with Charlemagne's court.
- Turpin, the warrior and archbishop of Reims, was a historic figure who was added to the Charlemagne cycle by medieval storytellers.
- Astolpho of England was described as "the handsomest man living." In spite of his beauty, in *Orlando Furioso,* he was turned into a tree by a sorceress who grew bored with him. Astolpho returned to his former self in time to help retrieve Orlando's lost wits.
- Ogier the Dane may or may not be based on a historic figure. Ogier was the hero of his own epic, which is attached to the Charlemagne cycle to a degree but is mostly independent of it.
- Malagigi the Enchanter, the only sanctioned magician in the group, generally acted as adviser to the others and provided them with magical tools.
- Florismart was a loyal friend to Orlando and was faithful to his chosen lady, Flordelis.
- Ganelon, or Gano, of Mayence was the treacherous enemy of all the rest. In the *Song of Roland,* it was Ganelon who was responsible for the ambush that led to Roland's death, a treason he paid for with his life.

Storytellers might enjoy sharing not only the stories full of adventure, magic, and

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The Emperor Charlemagne is seated on his throne and surrounded by his most important officials, as the scholarly Alcuin presents him with several manuscripts. French artist Jules Laure (1806–1861) painted this work in 1837. *(Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY)*

derring-do that these larger-than-life characters inhabit, but the historical tales of Charlemagne as well.

See also: Epics.

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Charon

(Greek)

In Greek mythology, Charon was the ferryman of the dead. The son of Erebus and Nyx (Night), he ferried the souls of the dead over the river Acheron, or in some myths the Styx River, to the underworld.

Charon took only those souls whose bodies had received the rites of burial and carried the proper fee. This fee was a coin, called an *obol,* which was placed in the mouth of the corpse during burial. Those unfortunate souls who did not have proper payment never crossed to the underworld but were left to wander forlornly and eternally on the river's bank.

Charon is usually portrayed as a grim, taciturn old man wearing a black, hooded cloak or a sailor's cape. His ancestry is open to question, as he is not mentioned in the earliest mythologies.

It is possible that the name *Charon* is actually a corruption of the Etruscan *Charun,* the name of the demonic guardian to the underworld. Charun, however, has wings, which might have been misinterpreted by the Greeks as a cloak. Charun also has a beaked nose, like that of a vulture, and carries a weapon.

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Whether or not Charon and Charun are one and the same, Charon survives in modern Greek folklore as the Charos. This dangerous black figure, bird, or winged being carries his prey to the underworld.

See also: Death.

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Chaucer, Geoffrey

(c. 1342–1400)

The English poet Geoffrey Chaucer created texts ranging from short poems to tellings of dream visions. His frame narrative *The Canterbury Tales* is considered one of the greatest poems in English literature.

Many of Chaucer's contemporaries wrote in French or Latin, but Chaucer wrote in the vernacular English of his time, which is now known as Middle English. In addition to using the common language of his country, much of the material in his narratives derives from everyday life.

Chaucer had strong connections to the English court and held a number of important posts. He began as a page and went on to become controller of customs in London and a member of Parliament. His early work is frequently connected to specific persons at court. His *Book of the Duchess,* written in about 1369–1370, commemorated the death of Blanche, wife of John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster. The courtship rituals engaged in by birds in his work *The Parliament of Foules* (c. 1372–1382) may be a subtle commentary on some of the human "rituals" that Chaucer observed at court.

Chaucer is believed to have begun work on *The Canterbury Tales* sometime around 1387. While he had planned to write 116 or more tales, he worked on only twenty-four, and not all of these were completed at the time of his death.

The format and many of the individual tales in *The Canterbury Tales* were inspired by previously written texts, most notably Boccaccio's *Decameron*. But *The Canterbury Tales* is unique in its inclusion of characters that are true to life and represent all the social classes of Chaucer's time. *The Canterbury Tales* are regarded by scholars as a fertile source of information about the social classes, class stereotypes, and rituals of the Middle Ages.

Some scholars also believe that Chaucer's text has a real and functional oral nature, meaning that the text was meant to be read aloud to its medieval audience. Scholars also have noted the use of oral formula,

Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* was a best seller from its initial publication in the early fourteenth century C.E. This portrait is believed to be the only known likeness of Geoffrey Chaucer, despite the fact that it dates to the fifteenth century—nearly 100 years after his death. *(Image Select/Art Resource, NY)*

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repetitions, and other storytelling memorization aids throughout the individual tales.

Chaucer died on October 25, 1400. He was laid to rest at Westminster Abbey.

Judith Mara Kish

See also: *Canterbury Tales, The.*

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Chickens

Hens and roosters are the focus of many folktales, proverbs, and folk sayings, in which they appear as both good and evil figures.

Perhaps the best-known Western folktale involving a chicken is the story of Chicken Little, who panicked all the other animals when he cried, "The sky is falling!" This story has entered the common idiom, and alarmists often are compared to Chicken Little.

Another story, which originated in Spain and has spread across Hispanic cultures, is that of "The Half-Chick." In this tale, a baby chick was born with only half a body, one leg, one wing, one eye, half a head, and half a beak. This helpless creature went out to find his place in the world and became the first weathervane.

For the most part, the tales and folk beliefs about chickens vary from culture to culture, but some are shared. For example, a black hen generally is considered bad luck. A Hungarian folktale tells of a small energetic devil with vampiric tendencies called Liderc. This creature was said to have hatched out of the first egg of a black hen that had been incubated in a human's armpit.

In Germany the sight of all hens is considered bad luck and signals the arrival of bad news, while roosters mean good luck. An earthier folk belief is that if a hen lets a dropping fall on someone, it means bad luck, while rooster droppings mean good luck.

In both Europe and North America, there are sayings that link hens and roosters to appropriate human behavior. Countries with a history of sexual inequality have sayings such as "Hens that crow like roosters are a sign of misfortune" or "It is a sad house where the hen crows louder than the cock." A version collected from England and the United States claims, "Whistling girls, like crowing hens, always come to some bad ends."

A more recent verse retorts, "Girls who whistle and hens who crow / Will have fun wherever they go." And a folk saying claims, "The rooster crows, but it's the hen that delivers the goods."

In the modern world, the term *henpecked* refers to a husband who is dominated by his wife. This probably comes from the common chicken behavior of a hen pecking angrily at a rooster.

A chicken's cackling is also mentioned in certain folk beliefs. In Germany, a girl who wishes to know if she will marry in the next year must knock on the chicken coop on Christmas Eve at midnight. If the hen cackles, the girl will remain single, but if the rooster cackles, she will marry.

The quick agitation of chickens when they sense danger has led to the comparison of a coward to a chicken. The phrase "fly in the face of danger" refers to a hen trying to fend off an attacking animal. And a hen's maternal nature has become a symbol of motherly love—to be "taken under someone's wing" refers to the way a hen protects a chick.

In modern folklore, chicken tales abound. The story of a flock of chickens that was living on the Los Angeles Freeway became part of urban lore. Dozens of tales were told of the flock's origin and why it landed in such an unusual spot. And the ubiquitous joke, "Why did the chicken cross the road?" continues to invite ridiculous answers.

See also: Cockatrice.

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Child, Francis James

(1825–1896)

Francis James Child was an American folk musicologist and literary scholar. His five-volume work, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads,* also known as *The Child Ballads,* is considered the first important publication in the field of English ballad scholarship.

Child was born on February 1, 1825, the son of a Boston sailmaker. The family was poor, so Child attended Boston public schools. Through the generosity of Epes Sargent Dixwell, the principal of the Boston Latin School, Child was able to enter Harvard University. He graduated first in his class in 1846. Child then took a professorship in mathematics at Harvard, followed by professorships in history and political economy. In 1851 he was named the Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory, a position he held for twenty-five years.

Always interested in folklore, specifically in folk music, Child collected ballad books in many languages throughout his tenure at Harvard, and he corresponded with scholars around the world. Thanks to his efforts, the Harvard library houses one of the largest folklore collections in existence.

In 1860, Child married Elizabeth Ellery Sedgwick. They had three daughters and one son. Child was described as a charming man with a good sense of humor who was nicknamed Stubby Child due to his height and stooped shoulders. Unable to serve in the American Civil War because of poor health—he suffered from gout and rheumatism—Child raised money and wrote articles, broadsides, and ballads in support of the Union.

Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* is impressive in its exhaustive scholarship. Child chose 305 ballads as seminal and studied and described their structure and variations with great care. Unlike other scholars, Child worked with the actual manuscripts of ballads rather than with published editions that might have added errors. He also hunted for songs and stories in other languages that bore relationships to the English and Scottish ballads.

Child's other works include *The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser* (1855) and *Observations on the Language of Chaucer and Gower* (1863). He was also the general editor of a series on British poets, which was begun in 1853 and reached 150 volumes.

In 1893, Child was in a carriage accident from which he never fully recovered. He died on September 11, 1896, and was buried in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. His work remains invaluable to folklorists, folk musicians, and storytellers.

See also: Ballads.

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Chiron

(Greek)

In Greek mythology, Chiron is a centaur, a half-horse, half-human creature. Chiron was the only one of these beings that was truly civilized, kind, intelligent, and highly learned. His superior character was attributed to his ancestry. Chiron was the son of the primal god Cronos, who took the form of a stallion and sired Chiron with the nymph Philyra.

Chiron was a brilliant scholar, a great healer, and a teacher to princes and heroes.

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Chiron was the wise, kind, civilized centaur who taught the hero Jason. Chiron is shown here in a somber portrait from a Roman fresco that was recovered from the buried city of Herculaneum. *(Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)*

Jason, who was later to go on a quest for the Golden Fleece, was a student of Chiron's. Other students were Hercules, who sought Chiron's help in completing his twelve labors, and Achilles, the great warrior of the *Iliad*. Chiron also taught the god Asclepios the art of healing and founded the Chironium, which was a healing temple on Mount Pelion, Chiron's home.

Chiron's death was accidental. He was wounded by a stray arrow during Hercules's fight with a group of drunken centaurs. The arrow was poisoned, but Chiron was immortal and could not die. In terrible pain, he willingly traded his immortality for the life of Prometheus, who was chained to a rock for endless torment as punishment for giving fire to humankind. Prometheus was freed, and Hercules released Chiron from his suffering with a merciful arrow. Chiron became the constellation Sagittarius.

Chiron also appears in Dante's fourteenth-century epic *The Divine Comedy* as the guardian of the seventh circle of hell. He is also a character in John Updike's 1963 novel, *The Centaur*.

In astronomy, Chiron is the name of an unusual object, possibly a comet or a planet, that orbits between Saturn and Uranus. Other objects, which are probably true asteroids and orbit between Neptune and Jupiter, are known as centaurs. It is fitting that the astronomical Chiron lies separate from the other centaurs in the sky, just as the mythical Chiron did at his home at the foot of Mount Pelion.

See also: Centaurs.

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Chupacabras

(Latin American)

Chupacabras are mythical monstrous predators that attack farm animals, especially goats, and drain their blood. This behavior earned them the name "goat suckers," which is a literal translation of chupacabras.

Chupacabras entered contemporary folklore in 1975, when several Puerto Rican farm animals were found drained of blood, with punctures on their necks. In the 1990s, there were reports of hundreds of these attacks on animals.

The descriptions of this nocturnal creature vary widely. It has been said to be 2 to 5 feet (.5 meters to 1.5 meters) tall, with red, orange, or black eyes, and a wolflike jaw, full of sharp fangs. Some claim that its dark gray skin is covered with coarse hair, while others say the skin can change color. Its short forearms end in two three-fingered, clawed hands,

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and some claim to have seen quills or spikes running down its back that allow it to fly or at least glide. Some reports include batlike wings.

A chupacabra either walks upright on powerful, clawed feet or hops like a kangaroo. The chupacabra also hisses, a sound that apparently can nauseate those who hear it. Some people have recorded that chupacabras give off a sulphuric stench.

Theories about the creature's origin have ranged from aliens leaving the creatures behind to genetic experiments gone awry. Many people, however, are certain that chupacabras exist only in the imagination.

Toward the end of the twentieth century, there were reports of chupacabras throughout the Caribbean, in Mexico and Central America, and into Florida, Texas, and Arizona. They were even reported in major U.S. cities, including New York and San Francisco. There have been few reported sightings of chupacabras since the turn of the twenty-first century.

See also: Urban Legends.

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Cockatrice

(European)

In medieval times, the image of the legendary serpent known as the basilisk began to change. It gained legs, a predatory beak, wings, and a coiling tail.

This new monster was said to come from a rooster's egg that had been hatched by a reptile. The cockatrice, the result of this unlikely engendering and hatching, looked something like a basilisk, something like the two-legged dragonlike wyvern, and something like a cockerel.

The cockatrice was just as vicious and venomous as the basilisk, its breath just as poisonous, and its gaze just as deadly. As with the basilisk, only the weasel was immune to the cockatrice's poison, and the two would sometimes battle.

The one sure way to kill a cockatrice was to hold up a mirror to reflect its image back at it. It would either be killed by its own evil gaze or be so overcome by the sight of its own hideousness that it would instantly die.

See also: Bestiary; Chickens.

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Collective Unconscious

The collective unconscious is a set of ideas that is inherited, not learned, and is consistent in all cultures. This concept was introduced by Swiss psychiatrist and founder of analytical psychology Carl Gustav Jung.

In the early years of the twentieth century, Jung was struck by the universality of many stories, images, and themes. He saw that the characters and archetypes of human dreams and stories did more than transcend the dreamer's or teller's culture: They were innately present in every human mind even before an individual was exposed to a specific culture.

The conscious part of the mind involves only what a person is actively aware of—the waking state. The unconscious is where the thoughts, emotions, experiences, and information that rarely reach the conscious level reside. Both the conscious and unconscious levels of a human mind belong to the individual's psyche, regardless of outside influences. Jung divided

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the unconscious into two parts—the personal and the collective.

The personal unconscious is made up of those things that have been built up in the psyche during development. The contents of the collective unconscious, however, are not acquired through experience but inherited. In this way, a person is linked to the species and to the past of the species. Within the collective unconscious are the psychological archetypes, the basic images, figures, or patterns, such as the Wise Old Man or the Trickster, that are part of each of us.

See also: Jung, Carl Gustav.

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Comets

In antiquity, comets were seen as eerie messengers of change or even doom. In the modern world, where the scientific explanation for them is known, there are still those who see comets as harbingers of dread.

The seemingly unpredictable appearance of comets and the mystery surrounding them filled the ancients with awe. The comet's shape was also seen as a portent. Some cultures interpreted the long, streaming tail as the blade of a sword—a prophecy of war—while others saw it as trailing hair, which was related to mourning.

The comet named for the seventeenth-century English astronomer Edmund Halley was first recorded around 240 B.C.E. The 1066 reappearance of Halley's Comet was recorded around the world. The Anasazi of the American Southwest left a carving of it on an Arizonan cliff, without any clues as to what it meant to them. The Chinese kept careful records of the comet's visit. In Europe, the comet's visit inspired terror, since people there saw it as an omen of war and the death of rulers. William the Conquerer of Normandy, however, saw it as a sign of his victory. In fact, after his victory over King Harold II at the Battle of Hastings in 1066, the comet was embroidered into the famous Bayeux Tapestry, which depicts that battle.

In folk belief, comets always have been omens of dread. In the sixteenth-century Swiss illuminated manuscript known as the Lucerne Chronicles, the 1456 appearance of Halley's Comet was blamed for earthquakes, illness, a mysterious red rain, and the birth of two-headed animals. Pope Calixtus III is said to have excommunicated the comet as an instrument of the devil.

In the United States, the 1835–1836 appearance of Halley's Comet was blamed for the massacre at the Alamo and a large fire in New York City. In 1910, astronomers at the University of Chicago's Yerkes Observatory used spectroscopy to study Halley's Comet. They discovered that the comet's tail contained poisonous cyanogen gas. People panicked when they learned that Earth would pass through the "deadly" tail on its next visit. Some people committed suicide, and others bought comet insurance.

As recently as the late twentieth century, people continued to fear comets. A rumor circulated during the 1985–1986 appearance of Halley's Comet claimed that the comet would crash into Earth and kill everyone. Its next appearance is predicted to be in 2061.

See also: Fates.

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Compassion

For all of the dazzling variety found in world folktales, fairy tales, and myths, the one element that appears with remarkable consistency is compassion.

The hero or heroine of any tale, whether setting off on a quest, seeking his or her fortune, or being driven out into the world by a jealous stepmother, must show compassion to everyone and everything he or she encounters, or there is no chance of living happily ever after. This compassion can take the form of sharing food with a stranger, no matter how little the hero or heroine may have, saving the life of an animal, or picking fruit from an overburdened tree. The stranger will offer invaluable advice, the animal will appear to help the protagonist accomplish an impossible task, or the tree will shower him or her with gold. Those who scorn the beggar, slay the animal who cries for mercy, or ignore pleas for help will find themselves at the very least failing at their quest and, at worst, cursed, disfigured, stripped of their wealth or title, or killed.

Compassion goes hand in hand with generosity. The courtesy, the food, or the service must be given freely and without thought of reward, or it will not redound to the hero's or heroine's credit. Most of the time, it is very obvious when good deeds are done for base motives. The good fairy, magical animal, or other supernatural helper easily sees through deceit, as does the reader. Bad characters who do good deeds usually do them grudgingly and ungraciously and are impatient for their reward.

Human characters are more easily fooled by these impostors, however, and many traditional tales find the compassionate protagonist tricked out of a reward until he or she can unmask the usurper. Often this is accomplished with the help of those to whom the protagonist had earlier shown compassion.

This motif can be found in stories ranging from familiar Western fairy tales, such as "The Water of Life" or "Mother Holle," and Greek myths such as the story of Eros and Psyche, to African and Asian folklore. No matter where in the world a story takes place, compassion is one of the universal lessons taught through stories. Genuine kindness, respect, and generosity toward all living things are every bit as important to the heroic character's success as is a fearless heart.

Shanti Fader

See also: Motifs.

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Con Man or Woman/ Con Artist

A con man or woman, also known as a con artist, is someone who tricks, or cons, a gullible person into parting with his or her money. The term *confidence man* was coined in an 1847 U.S. newspaper story. It was used to describe a persuasive person who could win the confidence of a stranger in order to cheat him or her.

These tricksters are sometimes viewed as modern Robin Hoods, choosing as their victims only those who have wronged others. They generally are portrayed either as so-called city slickers who prey on newcomers or as wanderers who run a con and then leave town. Despite the romantic Robin Hood view of such swindlers, there is no safe haven for them, and their only motive for stealing is their own personal gain.

Con men and women are similar to the German folk hero Till Eulenspiegel in their arrogance. They usually are the heroes, and at least the protagonists, of their stories. Novelist Herman Melville was the first American writer to use a con man as a protagonist, in his sharply

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satiric novel *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* (1857). Con artists also are the heroes in such award-winning feature films as *Paper Moon* (1973) and *The Sting* (1973).

See also: Tricksters.

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Contendings of Horus and Seth, The

(Egyptian)

The Egyptian myth *The Contendings of Horus and Seth* recounts the conflict between two Egyptian gods, Horus and Seth. In ancient Egypt, Horus was a solar deity, and Seth, his uncle, was the god of the desert wastes.

Evidence dating to the late Old Kingdom (c. 2404–2191 B.C.E.) suggests that the two gods were originally peers and brothers. In the earliest tellings, two key mutilations took place: Horus lost an eye and Seth lost his testicles. The former was of primary importance, as it symbolized kingly power. The Egyptians saw the conflict between these two gods as a defining moment for humankind, in which conflict itself entered the universe—before Horus and Seth injured each other, there was no anger, shouting, conflict, or confusion.

The single most elaborate and cohesive narrative of the events that make up *The Contendings of Horus and Seth* can be found in Papyrus Chester Beatty I, which is the collection of antiquities that were the property of the Irish mining magnate Sir Alfred Chester Beatty. The details of the text demonstrate one form that the story had taken by the reign of Ramses V (1160–1156 B.C.E.). The details of this account follow.

The Text

Horus went before the sun god Re-Horakhty to claim the office of his late father, Osiris, king of Egypt. Most members of the ennead, which was a group of nine gods, and Thoth, god of wisdom, supported Horus's claim, but Re-Horakhty was angry with them. The sun god preferred to give the kingship to Seth, Osiris's brother, who was a grown man and stronger than young Horus. The Re-Horakhty summoned two gods, Ptah and the ram god Banebdjet. Banebdjet suggested that a letter be written asking the goddess Neith what to do about the matter.

Neith replied that if Horus was not made king, she would crash the sky to the ground. She explained that Seth should be given double his current possessions as well as the goddesses Anat and Astarte (daughters of Re-Horakhty) as his wives. This reply enraged Re-Horakhty, who called Horus weak and too small for the kingship.

When one of the other gods insulted Re-Horakhty, he retired to his tent and lay alone for a day. The goddess Hathor, in an attempt to cheer him up, approached her father and stripped off her clothes. Amused by his daughter, Re-Horakhty recovered his mood and summoned the gods once again. He called upon Horus and Seth to speak for themselves.

Seth's Claim to the Throne

Seth claimed to be strongest of the gods. He asserted that only he could slay the enemies of the sun as the solar barque, the sun's boat, traveled through the netherworld each night, and so he deserved to be king. This convinced the ennead and Banebdjet, but Thoth and another god protested that the office held by the father must be given to the son. Isis also protested. The ennead promised that justice would be done.

Angered, Seth threatened to slay them all with a 4,500-pound scepter. Re-Horakhty decided to withdraw the court to the Island-in-the-Midst and barred Isis from the proceedings. In the guise of an old woman, Isis bribed a

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ferryman to take her across to the island. Once there, she turned herself into a beautiful young woman who caught Seth's eye. She explained to the god that she was a widow whose son tended the cattle of his late father. She told Seth that a stranger had entered their stall and was threatening to beat her son and claim the cattle. Seth was outraged and undoubtedly wished to win the favor of this beautiful young woman. He proclaimed, "Should the cattle be given to a stranger when a man's son is present?" The Egyptian words for *cattle* and *office* are homonyms, so Isis had tricked Seth into proclaiming that Horus deserved the kingship.

Isis took the form of a kite and proclaimed victory, while Seth lamented that Isis had tricked him into saying such a thing. By now, even Re-Horakhty had lost sympathy for Seth and proclaimed that the crown should be awarded to Horus. But again, Seth protested. Re-Horakhty capitulated, agreeing to Seth's suggestion of a series of contests between the candidates.

The Contest

In the first contest, Seth and Horus transformed into hippopotamuses. They were to remain submerged for as long as possible, and the first to surface would lose the trial. Afraid for Horus, Isis made a harpoon and tried to catch Seth but stabbed (and released) Horus on her first attempt. When she did catch Seth, he called out that he was Horus. Overcome with pity, Isis released him. Horus, outraged by his mother's action, cut off her head and carried it into the mountains, where Isis transformed herself into a headless statue. News of all this enraged Re-Horakhty, and he ordered the ennead to punish Horus severely.

Later, Seth found Horus at an oasis. The stronger god tore out Horus's eyes and buried them in the mountain, where they grew into lotuses. Seth then returned to Re-Horakhty, claiming not to have found the young god. In the meantime, Hathor had come across the injured youth and healed his eyes. The rivals returned to Re-Horakhty, who had tired of the bickering. He demanded that everyone dine together and make peace.

But the battle did not cease there. Seth invited Horus for a feast. That night, as Horus slept at Seth's house, his uncle attempted to impregnate him. Horus caught the semen in his hand and took it home to show Isis. Frightened, Isis severed Horus's hand, threw it into the water, and fashioned a replacement for his lost hand. She then manually aroused Horus, put the resulting semen in a pot, and took it to Seth's garden to pour onto the lettuce growing there, knowing that Seth would eat it for his breakfast.

Seth and Horus appeared in court once again. Seth proclaimed that he should be given Osiris's office because he had "done a man's deed" to Horus. When the appalled ennead spit at Horus, the youth laughed. They should, he said, find the semen of Seth. Thoth called upon the semen of Seth, and it answered from the marsh. Thoth called upon the semen of Horus. The semen of Horus emerged as a solar disk from the head of Seth. Thoth claimed the disk for himself, and the ennead awarded the kingship to Horus.

Seth proposed one last contest: They would build and race boats of stone, and the winner would rule Egypt. Horus built a boat of wood plastered to look like stone. Seeing Horus's vessel afloat, Seth built a ship of stone, which sank. Seth turned into a hippopotamus and wrecked the boat of Horus, who speared him. The ennead finally put an end to this contest.

Horus sailed his boat to the goddess Neith to complain to her about the contest, which had lasted eighty years. Thoth told Re-Horakhty to write to Osiris, who would judge between them. Osiris expressed outrage at the current state of affairs. Why had the gods denied Horus his rights when Osiris was the only one who could nourish the gods by providing grain and cattle? Re-Horakhty replied that these things would exist even if Osiris had never been born. Osiris then threatened the gods when they entered his realm in the west (the netherworld).

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The matter between Seth and Horus was settled at last. Seth challenged Horus to one more contest, but the throne was awarded to Horus, and Seth was brought to the court and shackled. Re-Horakhty took pity on Seth and granted him a reward, making him the thunder in the sky.

Noreen Doyle

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Counting-Out Rhymes

Counting-out rhymes are formulaic rhymes generally used by children to help them choose sides for games. The rhymes are recited while one child, the chooser, points to or touches the others in turn with each word. The child touched at the last word is the one picked to participate, or in some cases, the one who is rejected.

These rhymes often are created by children, and they may be passed from child to child across a country or from generation to generation. As a result, counting-out rhymes vary little within linguistic groups but show changes over the generational transfers, often reflecting social changes. For example, one of the most popular counting-out rhymes in the United States is "Eenie, meenie, minie, mo."

Eenie, meenie, minie, mo,
Catch a tiger by the toe.
If he hollers, let him go.
My mother says to pick this one . . .

Prior to the 1960s, the third word in the second line was not the innocuous *tiger* but a racial epithet. The same rhyme also changed after the 1960s to reflect changing mores:

Eenie, meenie, minie, mo,
Catch a robber by the toe.
If you catch him, don't you cry,
Just you call the FBI.

Scholars have argued about the first line of the rhyme. Is it a corrupted form of Gaelic, a phrase from a medieval magician's patter, or simply nonsense?

Counting-out rhymes also may help children learn to count or learn the days of the week and the months of the year. Often they have no meaning, besides the counting-out function, other than to get in the insults that children seem to love inflicting on each other:

Inka bink,
A bottle of ink.
The cork fell out,
And you stink.

Storytellers who want to engage children in their tales find that incorporating counting-out rhymes into their repertoires is often the key to their success.

See also: Cumulative Rhymes and Tales; *Retellings: A Grain of Corn; The Gingerbread Boy.*

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Creation Stories of Mesopotamia

In ancient Mesopotamia (c. 9000–500 B.C.E.), there were several universal myths of creation. Within each civilization that occupied the region, a myriad of myths and at times conflicting traditions were used to explain the mystery of existence.

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Little is known about the first Sumerian myths, written during the third millennium B.C.E. The surviving material is fragmentary, and the documents so far discovered are difficult to interpret. Nevertheless, as far as can be determined, Mesopotamian texts from the earliest times to the decline of the cuneiform tradition in the first centuries B.C.E. do not appear to address the question of creation. The primal existence of the gods is assumed rather than explained, with heaven and Earth created by the god Enlil, the head of the Sumerian pantheon.

There is one exception, however, a myth in which heaven and Earth were separated before the existence of the gods Enlil and his spouse, Ninlil. A text written in the city of Ur (in what is now Iraq) explains that in its beginnings Earth was dark. There was no light or vegetation, and no water emerged from the deep. Another Sumerian composition, preserved in a copy from the early part of the second millennium B.C.E., entitled *Gilgamesh and the Netherworld,* contains a prologue that describes the formation of the world by the gods An and Enlil, who separated out the parts of the universe from an initial mass.

Sumerian Creation Myths

The origins of humankind are dealt with in a Sumerian poem from the second millennium, "The Song of the Hoe." This composition compares the creation of humankind to the growth of plants. After the god Enlil separated heaven from Earth and Earth from heaven, he made the human seed spout forth like a plant from the soil at a sacred place called Where Flesh Came Forth. Humans were then assigned the task of worshipping the gods, a common Mesopotamian mythological theme.

Another Sumerian poem, "The Disputation Between Ewe and Wheat," describes primeval Earth as initially being barren. People went about naked, eating grass as if they were sheep, for wheat and bread did not yet exist. Without ewes and goats, there was also no weaving, cloth, or clothing.

An explanation of how Earth came to be ordered is given in the Sumerian myth *Enki*

Marduk was the hero-god who slew Tiamat and began creation. This model of the sanctuary in Marduk's temple at Babylon shows how it may have looked at the time of King Nebuchadnezzar II, who ruled from 604 to 562 B.C.E. *(Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY)*

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and the World Order. Enki, one of the main deities in the Sumerian pantheon, was assigned responsibility for the organization of the world, including the fates of the land of Sumer, the foreign lands, and the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. To manage his work, he entrusted various gods with specific responsibilities. Selected deities were charged with management of the twin rivers and surrounding marshes, the sea, rains, irrigation and crops, construction and architecture, wildlife on the high plain, herding of domestic animals, oversight of the whole of heaven and Earth, and woman's work.

Enki and Ninmah

The Sumerian myth *Enki and Ninmah* gives an explanation for the creation of humankind. In the time after heaven and Earth were separated, there was a shortage of food. A solution was found by assigning minor gods the task of producing food by farming. To do so, they had to undertake the burdensome job of digging canals and dredging clay. The work was so difficult that the junior gods complained, and finally, fed up with all the work, they decided to rebel.

The senior god Enki, fast asleep at the time, was roused from his slumber. Realizing the need for a creative solution, Enki decided to create humankind. Humans would then bear the burden of working the soil and creating produce. The goddess Namma was asked to knead clay from the fresh waters that were under the earth and place it in her womb. She then gave birth to the first humans.

In the second part of this myth, Enki and the goddess Ninmah became inebriated at a banquet and challenged each other to a contest. The goddess began by creating people who were disabled and challenged Enki to solve their problems and provide for their welfare. Enki responded by assigning them professions so that they could be independent and earn their own livings. Enki in turn challenged Ninmah. He molded clay and placed it in the womb of a woman, creating a being unable to function. Ninmah was confounded. She could not find a suitable profession for the being to earn its daily bread. The myth concludes with the exclamation that Ninmah was not the equal of the great Enki.

Babylonian Traditions

Babylonian theologians and poets also incorporated stories about the creation of humans and the world in texts to justify and glorify kingship. The best-known myth of this type was *Enuma Elish,* or *When on High*. Created at the end of the second millennium B.C.E., it contains a story of a battle among the gods that was used as a charter myth for the emergence of a new political order. The story centers on the exploits of Marduk, a god who was elevated to supremacy in the city of Babylon at the end of the second millennium B.C.E.

The myth tells of Marduk obtaining his position as the chief god of Babylon and reflects on the unchallenged power of the Babylonian ruler. The story begins with the existence of an immense expanse of sweet (*apsu*) and salt (*tiamat*) waters that existed before the universe and first gods came into being. Out of the mingling of these primeval waters, the gods emerged in pairs. Like young children, the gods were rambunctious, and they so upset the god Apsu that he decided to destroy the young deities. The clever god Ea came to their rescue and killed Apsu.

Marduk

Described as perfect and unequaled, the god Marduk was born to Ea and his wife, Damkina. Marduk, as a leader of the younger generation, was selected by the gods to be their commander. He became their supreme leader and champion, charged with defending the lesser deities against the fury of the goddess Tiamat. The goddess was upset at all the noise and commotion, and she was determined to avenge the slaying of her husband, Apsu. Marduk, armed with an array of winds, heroically battled Tiamat, a symbol of the old order.

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Victorious in battle, Marduk needed to dispose of Tiamat's body. He split it in two like a dried fish and fashioned the upper part as heaven and the lower part as Earth. Afterward, he created the constellations and the netherworld. He also brought forth the Sun and Moon, organized the calendar, and was given the authority to care and provide for the sanctuaries.

Finally Marduk, thankful for the benefits granted by the gods and their submissiveness to his rule, decided to ease their burden by creating humans from the blood of a slain rebellious god. The myth employs this episode to explain that humans were created to sustain the gods and release them from their menial labors. This provided a rationale for humanity's rebellious nature. Marduk also gave the gods new roles by assigning them to various positions in heaven and on Earth.

The City of Babylon

In the next episode of Marduk's story, he demanded that the gods build him a capital city, Babylon. He also requested a temple, Esagila, in which he would dwell and administer the affairs of the gods.

In gratitude to Marduk, the gods complied. They prostrated themselves before him, pledged obedience to their unquestioned leader and commander, and confirmed his kingship. The myth continued with the gods pronouncing the fifty names of Marduk, each an aspect of his power and character. The story concludes with Marduk as the victor and absolute ruler.

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Culture Heroes

A culture hero is a mythological or historical character that is of major importance to a specific culture, group, or nation. Often, legend or folklore is built up around the lives of these characters. A culture hero is sometimes responsible for changing the world, or he may act as protector or savior of a people.

The Greek Titan Prometheus is an example of a culture hero that changed the world. He tricked the gods and stole fire to give as a gift to humankind. Prometheus also can be classified as a trickster. Coyote is a culture hero of many American Indians of the Southwest. Hare is both a trickster and the culture hero of certain groups in the American Southeast.

Historical figures who have become culture heroes are found throughout the world. The great Onondaga peacemaker Hiawatha is one such hero. Another is the pacifist leader of India, Mahatma Gandhi. Religious leaders also can be culture heroes, such as Moses, Jesus, and Buddha.

A number of celebrated early Americans are culture heroes. These include George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Davy Crockett, and folklore has been passed down through generations about all three. George Washington never did cut down a cherry tree or claim to "never tell a lie," but the story carries on.

American cowboys are culture heroes with numerous legends attached to them. A typical example is the loner who saves the day, the town, or the heroine from evil. The villain usually is a ruthless rancher or townsman.

Sports figures, however, are not culture heroes. Although they may be temporarily adored, they lack the other necessary attributes of culture heroes.

See also: Achilles; Baby Cast Adrift; Dongmyeongseong/Chumong (Korean); El Cid; Enmerkar; Etana; Gilgamesh; Havelock the Dane; Horus; Ilya Muromets/Ilya of

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Murom; Joe Magarac; John Henry; Johnny Appleseed; Lugalbanda; Maui; Ninurta/Ningirsu; *Sundiata;* Superman; Telepinu/Telepinus; Theseus; William Tell; Wonder Woman; Yoshitsune; Ziusudra; *Retelling: Cuchulain and the Green Man.*

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Cumulative Rhymes and Tales

Cumulative rhymes, also known as cumulative verses, and cumulative tales are closely related forms of storytelling.

Cumulative rhymes add a line or two with each new verse, after repeating the information presented in the earlier verses. As a result, each new verse is longer than the previous one. The subject of a cumulative rhyme may be serious and created for adults, as in some Hebrew chants, or silly and aimed at both adults and children.

Cumulative tales are simple stories with repetitive phrases. These tales unwind and then *re*wind and repeat, with new elements added with each repetition. The rhythmic structure of these tales is very appealing, especially to children.

The following is a sample of cadence and repetition from the rhyme known as "This Is the House That Jack Built."

This is the house that Jack built.
This is the malt
That lay in the house that Jack built.
This is the rat
That ate the malt
That lay in the house that Jack built.
This is the cat
That killed the rat
That ate the malt
That lay in the house that Jack built.

And so on. Another popular cumulative tale is the "Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly." This has a "gotcha" ending that comes after more and more animals are swallowed:

There was an Old Lady who swallowed
a horse.
She died, of course.

A subcategory of the cumulative tale is the jump tale, a spooky but simple story that has one major purpose: to make the listener jump with fear at the end. "Who's Got My Golden Arm" is one example. Much of the tale is the repetition of the phrase "Who's got my golden arm?" At the end, the teller points to a member of the audience and shouts, "You do!"

Cumulative tales and rhymes are likely to be enjoyed by people of all ages for generations to come.

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Curses

Curses are magic spells that are directed at a person, place, or object in order to bring about harm. Curses are believed to result in failure, injury, illness, or even death. Curses appear in both folklore and real life, in the Bible and the Koran, in the ancient world and the modern. There are different forms of curses, including those that are spoken and those that are invoked with a look, a form of curse commonly known as the evil eye.

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Effigies and Other Objects

Of the various methods by which curses are placed, perhaps one of the oldest is the use of effigies. These are crude figures that represent targeted individuals. The idea is that as an effigy is injured or destroyed, so, too, would the victim suffer and die.

Wax effigies have been found at ancient Egyptian and Indian sites, among others. Later examples were made of clay, wood, or stuffed cloth and painted to look as much as possible like the victim. During the reign of the Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses III (c. 1184–1153 B.C.E.), conspirators against him were found to have wax effigies in their arsenal.

In ancient Greece, curses were called *katadesmoi*. To the Romans, they were *tabulae defixiones*. In both cases, the curses included an invocation to a god or demon. They were written on a solid material, such as lead, and buried where it was believed their power would be activated, such as in a cemetery or near a sacred well. In the fourth century B.C.E., the Greek philosopher Plato wrote in his book *The Republic,* "If anyone wishes to injure an enemy; for a small fee [sorcerers] will bring harm on good or bad alike, binding the gods to serve their purposes by spells and curses (performed on effigies)."

Wax figures also were used in Europe during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. King James I of England broadened the Witchcraft Act, bringing penalty of death to anyone who invoked evil spirits or communed with familiar spirits. These activities were described in King James's book *Daemonologie* (1597):

> To some others at these times [the Devil] teacheth how to make pictures of waxe or clay. That by the roasting thereof, the persons that they beare the name of, may be continually melted or dried away by continuall sicknesse.

Effigies are sometimes stuck with pins or knives. So-called voodoo dolls play on this theme in New Orleans and other locations where voodoo is practiced.

Animal and human hearts, animal corpses, or any other objects that will quickly decompose also have been used for placing curses. These are buried in the ground with an invocation stating that as the objects rot away, the victim of the curse will die.

In Ireland, there are so-called cursing stones, which are turned to the left as a curse is recited.

Cursed People, Places, and Things

There are certain people, places, and objects that are said to carry a curse.

The famous curse of King Tut was placed on anyone who disturbed the tomb of Tutankhamen. It was said that an inscription on a clay tablet found within the tomb read, "Death will slay with its wings whoever disturbs the peace of the pharaoh." Earl Carnarvon, who funded the excavation of the tomb, and archaeologist Howard Carter, who opened the tomb in 1922, were believed to be the victims of this curse. Six months after he entered the tomb, Carnarvon was dead, and rumor makers spread the word. Although six members of the team did die suddenly, others, including Carter who simply dropped out of public view, went on to live long and normal lives. The mysterious tablet was never found and likely never existed. Ancient Egyptians were not known to write on clay tablets or refer to "winged death."

The first curse recorded in the Bible appears in the Book of Genesis, when the serpent is cursed to crawl upon its belly. In other references, as in the Book of Proverbs, undeserved curses are said to have no weight and may be turned to a blessing by God.

A famous curse protects William Shakespeare's grave. It says, in part, "Curst be he who moves my bones."

There are also supposedly cursed places. One such place is the Bermuda Triangle, a region in the Atlantic Ocean in which many people, along with ships and aircraft, have disappeared without a trace. Within the Bermuda

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Triangle lies the Sargasso Sea. The lack of wind over the sea and the proliferation of sargassum weed, which can entangle vessels, may contribute to the mysterious happenings.

The Hope Diamond was said to be cursed, supposedly bringing about the demise of several of its owners. But a twentieth-century gem dealer confessed to making the story up in an attempt to make the diamond seem more exotic.

The Boston Red Sox were said to suffer from "the curse of the Bambino." Babe Ruth (aka the Bambino) placed a curse on the team when he was sold to the Yankees in 1920. The curse stated that the Red Sox would never win another World Series. This held true until more than eighty years later, when the Red Sox won the series in 2004.

Many old families are thought to be cursed. A recent example is the Kennedy curse. The family's patriarch, Joseph Kennedy, supposedly had a curse placed on him that has affected many of his male descendants.

Curses in Folk Belief

The power of the curse became firmly fixed in European folk belief during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In England, a case came to trial in March of 1612 about a curse placed by Alison Device on John Law, a peddler who had refused to open his pack for her. Law believed that he had been cursed and collapsed with what was very likely a stroke. Device admitted to placing the curse on him and was sentenced to death.

Curses often are found in folktales. In "Sleeping Beauty," an evil fairy foretold that the heroine would prick her finger on a spindle and die. This curse was softened when a good fairy altered the punishment to a sleep of 100 years. In "The Frog Prince," a handsome young prince is cursed to remain a frog until a princess can break the spell, either with a kiss or, more violently, by hurling him against a wall.

Breaking Curses

There are as many ways to break a curse as there are types of curses. The power of an effigy or other cursed object can be taken away with a ceremony in which the object is destroyed. Other rituals can be performed to banish curses. Protective talismans or amulets also can be worn to ward off curses like the evil eye.

See also: Black Magic.

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Dahut/Ahes

(French)

Dahut (who is sometimes known as Ahes) was the beautiful but treacherous and lascivious daughter of Gradlon, the king of the city of Ys, also called Ker-Ys. She is a figure in the folklore of Brittany, a Celtic corner of France that lies on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean.

The legendary kingdom of Ys lay below sea level, as do many real cities in that region. The ocean was held back by a series of walls and powerful sluice gates. Dahut, who had taken many lovers, fell madly in love with a man who some versions of the story say was the ocean personified. Dahut, who would willingly do whatever her lover asked of her, stole the keys of the sluice gates from her father. Her lover then opened the gates, and the city was engulfed by the sea.

King Gradlon fled on horseback, with his daughter riding behind. Dahut clung desperately to her father. But beside them rode Saint Guenole, the king's confessor, who knew of Dahut's sin. As the waters nearly overtook them, Guenole told Gradlon what had happened, and the horrified king threw Dahut from his horse into the waves.

King Gradlon escaped to dry land, landing near the modern city of Quimper, France. To this day, a statue of King Gradlon on his horse, looking out to sea to where his city once stood, stands in the town. According to legend, Dahut still swims the seas, transformed into a siren, a woman whose beautiful voice lures sailors to their deaths.

The story of Dahut has inspired musicians and authors over the years. *Le Chant du Dahut* is a symphonic poem composed by Manuel Hernandez in 1986. Science fiction writers Poul and Karen Anderson wrote *The King of Ys* (1986–1988), a fantasy series based on the legend of Ys. The third volume of the series, *Dahut,* recounts the story of Dahut and the drowning of the city.

See also: Ys/Ker-Ys.

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Danish Traditional Tales

Danish traditional tales are learned and transmitted by traditional means. They include texts and genres that are counted as part of the broader category of Scandinavian traditional narratives, as well as stories that are unique to Denmark.

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History

Denmark's early literary history includes Norse mythology and ancient epic poetry. As the Viking age ebbed by 1066 C.E., the old sagas were replaced by Christian sacred texts. Eventually, new storytelling genres that were derived largely from northern European traditions took hold in the Danish popular imagination. By the nineteenth century, Denmark had become known for the vitality of its tale-telling.

There are several distinctive genres of Danish traditional tales that have been preserved in various ways. The nineteenth-century Danish historian Svend Grundtvig collected hundreds of folktales. Hans Christian Andersen reworked and compiled fairy tales. And the vibrant oral tradition features a wide range of folktales, including a unique variety of European numskull stories called Molboer tales.

First Collection of Tales

Svend Grundtvig (1824–1883) was an important philologist and folklorist who created the earliest scholarly collection of Danish traditional tales. His two-volume work, *Danske Folkeæaventyr,* was compiled between 1876 and 1883. Grundtvig's main area of interest was the study of ballads, or narrative songs. The system that Grundtvig developed for classifying the ballads provided the basis for Francis James Child's catalog of the ballads of England and Scotland. Grundtvig also constructed the first system for categorizing folktales into types. His system was likewise expanded by other folklorists who created indexes for tale types and motifs.

The tales in Grundtvig's collection were based on oral traditions. He assembled them using his own memory combined with the work of a network of other Danish writers. Grundtvig took a scholarly approach to the stories because

The famous Danish author Hans Christian Andersen based many of his popular stories on Danish traditional tales and other European folktales. *(Snark/Art Resource, NY)*

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he recognized their value to the study of language, culture, and history. He was, however, highly influenced by a literary bias that elevated the written text over the spoken word. Consequently, he reworked the stories according to his own artistic ideals, and the compilation does not necessarily represent how these tales were actually told. Nevertheless, his stories are excellent renditions of Danish folktales, and his work provides an important foundation for the study of folklore.

Hans Christian Andersen

Hans Christian Andersen (1805–1875) achieved worldwide fame as a compiler, performer, and writer of folktales and fairy tales. The son of a poor shoemaker, Andersen was born in the slums of Odense, a city on the island of North Fyn. His mother, Anne Marie Andersdatter, worked as a washerwoman and was likely responsible for introducing the young Hans to traditional folktales.

The stories that readers associate with Andersen are rooted in the Danish tales that he heard throughout his life. But Andersen was primarily a literary artist, and he reworked traditional and printed tales to meet the aesthetic sensibilities of his audience. Stories such as "The Ugly Duckling" reflect themes found in both traditional Danish folktales and Andersen's own childhood experiences. Other stories, such as "The Little Mermaid," are literary renditions inspired by European *märchen,* or "wonder tales."

Although Andersen used Danish texts and genres in much of his work, he also reworked stories from other nations. "The Emperor's New Clothes," for example, is a Danish folktale that is rooted in Turkish traditional stories. In addition to his beautiful anthology of stories, Andersen created literary works that exemplify the creativity and imagination that can emerge in folkloric expression.

Current Scholarship

Whereas Grundtvig and Andersen substantially reworked traditional texts to create highly polished literary works, contemporary folklorists carefully document stories as they are actually told. Many of the studies of Danish folklore are included in larger collections of Scandinavian studies. Traditional genres such as legends, household tales, jokes, and others constitute a rich body of Danish lore within the larger context of Scandinavian tradition.

Some of the Danish folktales include stories of the *nisses*. These little sprites often play tricks on unsuspecting members of a household.

Another indigenous genre is the Molboer tale. Set in the Jutland community of Mols, these tales center on a fantasy village of rural peasants. Mols is portrayed as a backward area populated by well-intentioned but naive fools. Ed K. Andersen, who emigrated from Denmark's island of Falster to Audubon, Iowa, knew a number of Molboer tales and told one that is characteristic of this genre:

> A Molboer was out working on his farm one day. He became upset because he saw a stork smashing down the grain with his big feet. He started chasing him out of the field, but this didn't do any good because he was tramping down the grain with his own big feet. He just didn't know what to do.
>
> So one of his neighbors said, "I've got a solution. What we'll do is get this big gate, and we'll carry him around on top of the gate so that he doesn't smash the grain down with his big feet."

As seen in this example, the humor of Molboer tales is quite subtle, and may be an acquired taste. Some storytellers find themselves clarifying the joke. Andersen explained, "You see, they wound up smashing down more grain by having four farmers carry the gate."

Other Molboer stories are more direct and the humor more obvious, but often the listener is left to figure out the foolish action by completing the joke. A good teller of these tales frequently draws from a vast repertoire and strings one Molboer tale onto another. The droll humor is characteristic of this variety of numskull, or noodle, tale.

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Molboer tales, stories of the *nisse,* and a variety of other narrative forms remain important components of a storytelling tradition that stretches back to the origins of Danish culture.

Gregory Hansen

See also: Norse Mythology.

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De Iside et Osiride

(Roman)

De Iside et Osiride is a literary work written in Roman times by the Greek philosopher and historian Plutarch (c. 46–120 C.E.). In this work, Plutarch retold and interpreted the myth of the Egyptian deities Isis and Osiris, and explained wider aspects of Egyptian myth, belief, cult practices, and etymology.

Plutarch's teacher was likely an Egyptian, and it is speculated that Plutarch was an early follower in the cult of Isis. He was a priest of Delphi from about 100 C.E. until his death.

Children of Rhea

Although Helios, the Egyptian sun god, warned Rhea, the sky goddess, against having intercourse with Cronus, the Egyptian earth god, she did so anyway. Helios then decreed that Rhea would not give birth on any day of the year.

Hermes, the Egyptian scribe god and moon god, who had also had relations with Rhea, gambled at dice with the Moon and won a bit of the Moon's light. From this, he fashioned five additional days of the year, which until this time had only had 360 days. On the first new day, Osiris was born; on the second, Aroueris, an Egyptian solar deity; on the third, Typhon, god of the desert waste; on the fourth, Isis; and on the fifth day, Nephthys.

Osiris and Aroueris were the sons of Helios, Hermes fathered Isis, and Cronus fathered Typhon and Nephthys. Osiris and Isis fell in love with each other while still within the womb, where they conceived Aroueris. Isis also gave birth to Aroueris while still within Rhea's womb. Other sources claim that Aroueris was the son of Helios.

Typhon and Nephthys were wed, possibly also within the womb, but Nephthys's son, Anubis, was not fathered by Typhon. Osiris had mistaken Nephthys for her elder sister, Isis, and slept with her. Nephthys abandoned the child of this union for fear of her husband's wrath. With the help of dogs, Isis found Anubis and raised him as her own son.

Osiris and Isis

Osiris, the mythic king of Egypt, introduced agriculture, laws, and religion to the Egyptians and then to the entire world. He traveled without weapons, using instead music and poetry to win the hearts of humankind.

During the time that Osiris was traveling, Isis watched over Egypt. Typhon took the opportunity to hatch a plot with some seventy minions and the Ethiopian queen, Aso, to defeat Osiris. He commissioned the construction of a handsome chest made to fit Osiris's body perfectly. During a feast, he offered the chest to anyone who was able to lie down inside it. Once Osiris was in the chest, Typhon shut him inside, bolted the lid in place, and dumped the chest in the river. It floated through the Tanitic mouth of the Nile and out to sea.

Isis learned of this and cut her hair in mourning. She wandered the countryside anonymously, asking children if they had seen the chest, until she learned that it had come ashore at the Syrian city of Byblos. By the time Isis discovered this, a tree had grown up

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around the chest, which Malcanthros, king of Byblos, had cut down to make a pillar for his palace. Osiris's chest was within this pillar. Once she arrived in Byblos, Isis wept by a fountain until her divine fragrance attracted the attention of the queen. The queen invited the mysterious woman to serve as nursemaid for the baby prince.

Isis suckled the baby on her finger and at night lay him in the fire to burn away his mortal parts. She took the form of a swallow and flew around the pillar, lamenting her husband entombed within. The queen caught Isis placing the baby in the fire and snatched up the child, which cost him immortality.

Isis then revealed herself and demanded the pillar, which was given to her. She wailed so loudly that one of the king's sons died of fright. Another prince accompanied Isis back to Egypt, where he too died of fright when he saw Isis embrace her dead husband.

Isis then took the pillar to Buto, where her son Aroueris was being raised. While hunting one night, Typhon found the chest, cut Osiris's body into fourteen parts, and scattered them. Isis went out in a papyrus boat to find and bury each piece. She was successful thirteen times, but a fish had eaten Osiris's penis, so she fashioned a new one.

The dead Osiris, now resurrected since all his body parts had been buried together, returned to train Aroueris for battle. Aroueris fought Typhon. At one point in their battle, Isis found her brother bound and set Typhon free. This enraged Aroueris, and he tore the crown from Isis's head. Hermes replaced the crown with a helmet in the shape of a cow's head.

Typhon then made a legal challenge, claiming that Aroueris was illegitimate. But the gods ruled in Aroueris's favor.

Here the tale ends.

Noreen Doyle

See also: Isis; Osiris.

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Deals with the Devil

The theme of humans making deals with the devil or with some other supernatural being is common throughout the Judeo-Christian world. Usually, the human ends up getting the better of the devil, but there are exceptions, such as in the story of Jean Dubroise.

The Devil's Church

In the Polish tale "The Devil's Church," a hermit in league with the devil sold his soul. When the hermit realized death was near, he offered the devil his soul if the devil would fulfill a few wishes. The devil agreed.

The hermit asked the devil to fell an oak forest and build a church and a coffin for him. All this was to be completed before the clock struck midnight. But the devil could not finish in time. Just as he was beginning the church tower, the clock struck twelve, and he had to leave.

The hermit recovered his health and confessed his sins. As for the church, it did not stand long. In that same year, it was struck by lightning and burned completely to the ground. It is said that every midnight, the devil's angry howls still can be heard.

The Master Smith

In the Norwegian folktale "The Master Smith," a blacksmith made a bargain with the devil that the fiend could have his soul after seven years. Until that time, the smith was to be the master of all masters in his trade. The devil agreed, and the smith placed a sign over the door of his forge that read, "Here is the master over all masters."

God and Saint Peter, however, stopped by and showed the smith the error of his boast. He asked for and was granted the following three wishes: Anyone the smith asked to climb up into his pear tree would be stuck there until the smith let him come down;

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anyone who sat in the smith's chair would stay there until the smith let him get up; and anyone the smith asked to creep into his steel purse would stay there until the smith let him out again.

When the seven years were up, the devil came to fetch the smith. The smith told him to climb up into the pear tree for a nice, ripe pear to eat. The devil did this and was unable to come down. The smith kept him up there for four years.

The smith then released the devil from the tree. He invited the devil to rest a while in his chair. Once the devil was seated, he could not get up. Again, the smith kept him in place for four years.

Now the devil was really ready to take the smith. But the smith asked if it was true that the devil could become as small as he pleased. The devil proved it by climbing into the smith's steel purse. The smith promptly put the steel purse in his forge's fire. Then he began to beat the steel purse as he would any hot metal. The devil yelled and bellowed and finally agreed that if the smith released him, the devil would never come near him again. The smith agreed, and let the devil go.

Now that he had barred himself from hell, the smith decided to see if heaven would have him. He reached the heavenly gates just as Saint Peter was beginning to close them. The smith hurled his hammer at the opening . . . and no one knows if he got in.

Bearskin

In the German tale "Bearskin" from the Brothers Grimm, a soldier without the means to earn a living met the devil and made a deal: The devil would give the soldier a jacket with pockets that were always full of gold. In return, the soldier had to wear the skin of a bear and not wash, groom himself, or pray for seven years. The soldier agreed.

After a number of years, the now filthy and bedraggled soldier, called Bearskin, helped an old man out of his financial difficulties. In exchange, the old man offered him the hand of one of his three daughters. The elder two refused to marry such a horrible figure, but the youngest consented. Bearskin offered her a token—half of a ring. (This is a traditional theme in folklore; the two halves are to be rejoined when the lovers meet.) Bearskin then left to complete the remainder of the devil's sentence.

When the seven years were over, the devil cleaned up Bearskin and dressed him as a rich noble. Bearskin returned to the house of his bride, and the eldest daughters immediately fell in love with him. When they discovered that he was the same man they had rejected years before, they were so overcome by jealousy that they killed themselves.

When the devil arrived, he released Bearskin from their deal because he had received two souls, the suicides, in exchange for one.

How Jack Beat the Devil

In the African American folktale "How Jack Beat the Devil," a character named Jack bet his soul during a gambling match with the devil. Jack lost the wager but was given a chance to save his soul. The devil would release Jack if he was able find the devil's house, which lay beyond the sea, before the Sun set on the next day.

Jack met an old man who advised him about what to do. The next morning, Jack caught a huge eagle and climbed aboard the bird for a ride. Even though Jack fed the bird bits of meat to keep it going on its flight, the eagle ate Jack's arm and leg. Jack pressed on and reached the devil's house. When the eagle landed, Jack's missing arm and leg were replaced.

Jack's next trial was to clear a field in one day. The devil's daughter, who had fallen for Jack, put her father to sleep so he wouldn't interfere. The next morning, when Jack awoke, the job was already done.

Jack's next task was to recover a ring from the bottom of a well. Once again, the devil's daughter put both her father and Jack to sleep. When Jack awoke in the morning, the job was

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already done. Finally, Jack was to pluck two geese at the top of a tall tree. Again, the job was done as Jack slept.

Jack married the devil's daughter. That night, they had to flee because the devil meant to kill Jack. The devil finally caught up with them, and the devil's daughter changed Jack into a log. The devil found the log, but Jack prayed aloud and drove the devil away.

The Devil and the Lazy Man

The French-Canadian tale "The Devil and the Lazy Man" features a lazy man named Jean Dubroise, who had the finest crops and animals even though he never did any work. One night, a neighbor discovered the truth. Dubroise had made a deal with the devil to send loups-garous (werewolves) to do Dubroise's farmwork under cover of night.

As soon as it was safe, the neighbor rushed to the local priest. While Dubroise was in town the following day, the priest had Dubroise's farm sprinkled thoroughly with holy water. That night, when the devil and the loups-garous appeared, the holy water drove them off. The furious devil was sure that Dubroise was trying to break their pact and dragged him away.

The priest broke the spell on the loups-garous, which turned them back to mortal men. But Dubroise was gone for good.

Modern Tales

Deals with the devil also have been portrayed in modern fiction. Washington Irving's story "The Devil and Tom Walker" was published in 1824. *The Devil and Daniel Webster,* by Stephen Vincent Benét, was published in 1937. Benét's work was the basis for a play by Archibald MacLeish, an opera, and two films.

In 1979, the Charlie Daniels Band recorded "The Devil Went Down to Georgia," a song about a young musician, Johnny, who accepts the devil's challenge and beats him in a fiddling contest. The continued popularity of the song is evidence that this theme will continue to inspire songs and stories for years to come.

See also: *Flying Dutchman;* Freischutz; Tale Types.

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Death

Death is one of the great inevitabilities for all living creatures. Despite this universality, death is still shrouded in mystery.

Religious systems provide various explanations for what occurs after death, from reincarnation in Buddhism to the concepts of heaven and hell in Christianity. Death is sometimes portrayed as a specific figure. These specters range from the Western stereotype of a black-robed skeleton with a scythe to an angel, as in Jewish lore.

Many cultures are reluctant to accept the inevitability of death. So outwitting or cheating death has become a common folk theme.

Capturing Death

Many stories feature the capture and imprisonment of a personified Death. Once Death is seized, no one is able to die no matter how old or ill. The captor sees that Death is necessary, and releases him.

In some versions, such as one from Nepal, the captor longs for death and releases the prisoner. In another version from Scotland, the captor tries to keep Death trapped so that his old mother can continue to live. In this case, it is the sight of his mother's suffering that causes the captor to release Death.

Tricking Death

There are also folktales from around the world on the theme of trying to trick death. In a

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Sephardic Jewish tale, King David nearly succeeds in outwitting the Angel of Death.

In the ancient Near Eastern *Epic of Gilgamesh,* the hero attempts to gain immortality and learns of a plant growing underwater that can restore youth to a man. Gilgamesh finds the plant, picks it, and begins the long journey home. But as Gilgamesh bathed in the cool water of a well, a serpent rose up and snatched away the plant. Gilgamesh is forced to accept the inevitability of death. In a hidden message, the snake shows nature's pattern of regeneration in sloughing its skin.

There are also many stories of attempts to return a dead lover to life. In the Greek myth of Orpheus, the hero attempts to return his beloved wife, Eurydice, to life. But his own weakness causes him to fail. There are variants on this theme in which the dead lover warns away the living lover from excess grief. In others, the living lover willingly dies in order to be reunited with the dead lover.

One tale stands out among those of failed returns. In the Indian *Mahabharata,* husband and wife Satyavan and Savitri so love each other that when he dies, she goes after him. Savitri follows the god of death, Yama, so insistently that he relents and returns Satyavan to life.

See also: Abassi/Abasi and Atai; Ajok; Anubis/Anpu; Banshee; Charon; Erra; Hel; Nergal; *Retelling: Orpheus and Eurydice.*

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Decameron

(Italian)

The *Decameron,* written by Giovanni Boccaccio in about 1349–1353 C.E., takes its name from the Greek words for "ten days." This work of 100 stories is organized into themes and presented as the storytelling efforts of a group of people.

The *Decameron* begins with a framework story about ten young people, three men and seven women, who flee Florence in 1348 and go to a country villa to avoid a plague outbreak. To help pass the time, they decide to hold daily storytelling sessions. Each day, the ten elect a king or queen for the day to decide what the general theme of the stories will be for the following day.

The 100 stories vary from romantic to satiric and include characters from every element of fourteenth-century Italian society. Some stories critique the clergy. Some examine the eternal battle between men and women.

There are also clear parallels to folklore tale types and motifs. Some of these parallels are gruesome, such as the tale of the cuckolded husband killing his rival and forcing his wife to eat the lover's heart, a folklore tale type that turns up in French medieval lore.

Others have worldwide parallels, such as in the tale of Dioneo. On the eighth day of the *Decameron,* Dioneo recites a story of a fellow who thinks he is clever but finds himself being tricked by someone who is even more cunning, a tale very similar to an eighth-century folktale from India.

See also: Boccaccio, Giovanni.

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Demeter and Persephone

(Greek)

In Greek mythology, Demeter, who was called Ceres by the Romans, was one of the children of Cronos and Rhea and a sister of

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Zeus. She was the goddess of the earth, fertility, and grain. It was she who taught farmers to plow and plant, and she called the crops forth from the tilled earth. Demeter and her daughter, Persephone, goddess of spring, were honored in the highly secretive Eleusinian mystery rites, cult celebrations that took place in the Greek city of Eleusis, north of Athens.

When Persephone was a young maiden, Hades, the god of the underworld and brother to Zeus, fell in love with her. He stole her away to his kingdom beneath the earth and made her his reluctant queen.

Distraught at the loss of her daughter, Demeter appealed to the gods, but she was told that it was a good match and that she should be happy. In despair, Demeter disguised herself as an old woman and wandered the earth, lamenting and refusing to allow anything to grow.

At one point in her wanderings, Demeter came to the land of Eleusis, where she served as a nursemaid to the king's son. When Demeter attempted a ritual to grant the child immortality, she was interrupted and her divine nature was revealed. Demeter stayed and taught the people of Eleusis the secrets of agriculture, and gave them the rites that came to be known as Eleusinian.

Meanwhile, mortals and gods alike were suffering because Demeter continued to withhold the earth's fertility. Without her blessing, nothing grew, flowered, or bore fruit. Mortals starved, and there was nothing to offer to the gods in sacrifice.

Finally, Gaia, the earth herself, appealed to Zeus. Despite his earlier approval of the match, Zeus gave in and sent Hermes to order Hades to return Persephone to her mother.

Persephone was delighted, however, when she was in the underworld she had eaten six seeds from a pomegranate given to her by Hades. Since nobody who had eaten food in the underworld could return entirely to the world of the living, Hermes proposed a compromise: Persephone would spend half of the year with Demeter and the other half of the year with Hades.

In a Greek sculpture dating to 440 B.C.E., earth goddess Demeter (left) offers Triptolemos (center) a sheaf of wheat, symbolizing the dawn of agriculture. Demeter's daughter Persephone, goddess of spring, is seen on the right. *(Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)*

Nobody was entirely happy with this arrangement, but they all agreed to it. Persephone returned to Demeter, and Demeter allowed the earth to bloom once more. Each time Persephone returned to the underworld, however, Demeter grieved anew and the earth lay barren until her daughter returned to her.

Shanti Fader

See also: Mother Goddess/Earth Mother.

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Digenis Acritas

(Greek)

Digenis Acritas, a historical epic with fantastic elements, is named for its hero. It was written in Greek by an anonymous author of the twelfth-century Byzantine Empire, which consisted of lands in Asia Minor, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, and part of Italy. The Byzantine Empire was the eastern Roman Empire, and it existed for a thousand years after the fall of the western empire. The epic's plot is based on historical events, including the occasional Arab invasions of Byzantine lands and the reconciliation of Byzantine Christians with Muslims.

The conflicts between the Byzantine Empire and the Arabs began in about the seventh century C.E. and lasted until the early eleventh century. The *acrites* were the Byzantine military forces that safeguarded the frontier regions of the imperial territory from external enemies and adventurers who operated on the fringes of the empire.

Digenis Acritas is in two parts. The first part, known as the "Lay of the Emir," describes the invasion of Cappadocia by an Arab emir. The emir carried off the daughter of a Byzantine general. Love bloomed between them, and the emir agreed to convert to Christianity for her sake. They settled down in what is now Romania and had a son, named Digenis Acritas.

The second part of the work, "Digenis Acritas," is about the hero's life. It tells of his superhuman feats of bravery and strength. Among other feats, the hero kills a dragon and defeats the three leaders of a group of bandits in single combat.

One story in this second section claims that Digenis gripped the Pentadaktylos (Five Fingers) mountain range in Arab-occupied Cyprus to gain leverage so he could leap to Asia Minor. No one matched Digenis in martial skills and strength. The female warrior Maximu challenged him and was defeated. Later, the two had an adulterous affair.

In the end, with all his enemies defeated, Digenis was able to settle down in the palace he built for himself and live out his life in peace.

See also: Epics.

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Dilmun

(Sumerian and Babylonian)

Dilmun is the name given in several Mesopotamian stories to what is now the island of Bahrain in the Persian Gulf. Ancient literary and economic sources indicate that it was home to merchants who developed extensive trade contacts with the Sumerians during the third millennium B.C.E.

The Sumerian myth *Enki and Ninhursanga* describes Dilmun as both an idyllic place, holy and pure, and a trade center for merchants. The epic Sumerian flood hero Ziusudra was given immortality and settled in a faraway place called Dilmun.

The mythic story of conflict between Enmerkar, a legendary king of Uruk, and his enemy, the Lord of Aratta, begins by explaining that in ancient days before Dilmun existed, trade also did not exist.

See also: Flood, The; Gilgamesh.

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Djinn/Djinni/Jinn/Genie

(Arabic)

The djinn, according to Arabic tradition, are a race of beings that existed thousands of years before the arrival of humans. These beings were created out of the hot desert wind. Some of the djinn were obedient to the will of God. Others were evil. The Afrits were the most powerful class of evil spirits.

The djinn lived long lives, but they were not immortal. They could be slain by other djinn or by humans, or even by a shooting star. When a djinn was mortally wounded, the fire of its blood would ignite, leaving nothing but ash.

Like humans, the djinn needed to eat, drink, and take mates. Sometimes they mated with humans. The resulting offspring usually had aspects of both parents.

Djinn were also shape-shifters. They were able to take on the form of animals and humans at will. The evil djinn gave themselves away by their monstrous forms when they attempted to appear human. The djinn also could become invisible or change their size at will.

Origins of the Djinn

Traditionally, the djinn resided in the mountains of Khaf, in what is now Iran. But many are said to have lived wherever they wished—in deserts, underground, or even in abandoned human houses.

The djinn also wandered through rivers, towns, or even in the lower levels of the heavens, where they could eavesdrop on what the angels were saying. This gave them foreknowledge that could be passed on to any humans who were clever and bold enough to deal with the djinn.

Certain human monarchs are said to have ruled over the djinn, including King Solomon of ancient Israel. Tradition claims that King Solomon was a magician as well as a wise man. The djinn are said to have obeyed him without argument. The six-pointed Jewish star, also called the Star of David, is also known as the Seal of Solomon, the symbol of his power over the djinn.

Tales of the Djinn

Dust devils are small desert whirlwinds that carry sand or dust. They can grow into tall, spinning pillars that folk belief says are caused by the swift movement of the djinn.

The djinn could be chased away by crying out "Iron! Iron!" The djinn, like other supernatural beings, could not endure proximity to that metal; even the mention of it scared them away.

Anecdotes about the djinn abound. One of the most familiar tales, from *The Thousand and One Nights,* or *The Arabian Nights,* is that of "The Fisherman and the Genie." In this trickster tale, a fisherman released a vengeful and dangerous djinn from a bottle. He then tricked the being back into the bottle by insisting that it was impossible for so large a djinn to ever fit into so small a space. Another famous and less-threatening djinn appeared in the story "Aladdin and the Magic Lamp."

Other tales of the djinn include the story of a shepherd who was on good terms with the local djinn. One of his sheep was stolen by a wolf. When the shepherd called on the djinn for help, a voice cried out, "Wolf, restore him his sheep!" The wolf meekly returned the sheep.

The thirteenth-century Arab historian Ibn al-Athir recounted a story that took place near the city of Mosul in which a djinn woman lost her son to a local disease. Only by mourning with her could humans escape being stricken by the same disease.

In medieval Iraq, near the Turkish border, a group of hunters saw a group of djinn mourning and heard them crying, "The great king of the djinn is dead!"

Stories of the djinn have been told for centuries, and retellings of such classic tales as *The Thousand and One Nights* seem likely to keep them alive in storytelling.

See also: Arabic Storytelling.

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Dobrynya Nikitich

(Russian)

In the Russian folk ballad epics, called *bylini,* Dobrynya Nikitich is one of the most important of the *bogatyri,* the knights of Prince Vladimir of Kiev. He is an epic hero—a mighty warrior who is second in might and power, after Ilya Muromets.

Dobrynya Nikitich was probably based on a real prince, who was the uncle to the historic Prince Vladimir. As a member of the nobility, Dobrynya Nikitich was more sophisticated than the other bogatyri. He was able to read, sing, and play chess, and he served as a diplomat as well as a warrior. In one *bylina,* Dobrynya Nikitich went on a diplomatic mission for Prince Vladimir that turned into a battle with a Mongol tsar, Batur. He won the battle and forced Tsar Batur to pay tribute to Prince Vladimir.

Dobrynya Nikitich's most famous feat involved the flying, fire-breathing dragon called Zmei Gorynytch, who had been warned by an omen that Dobrynya Nikitich would be the one to kill him. On a warm day, the hero decided to cool off by bathing in a river. Zmei Gorynytch attacked Dobrynya Nikitich while he was separated from his sword. The hero fought the dragon, using only his bare hands and a sand-filled hat as weapons.

After a great struggle, Dobrynya Nikitich won. As he was about to grab his sword and cut off the dragon's head (or heads, in some variants), Zmei Gorynytch begged for mercy, swearing never to hurt another Russian. Dobrynya Nikitich's heart softened, and he let Zmei Gorynytch go.

The evil dragon had lied to Dobrynya Nikitich. Upon being released, he flew directly to Kiev, where he snatched up Zabava, the niece of Prince Vladimir. Dobrynya Nikitich went after the dragon to rescue Zabava. This time, Dobrynya Nikitich showed the dragon no mercy. He killed Zmei Gorynytch and brought Zabava safely home.

In another adventure that celebrated Dobrynya Nikitich's diplomatic skills, the hero set off to negotiate with another ruler for a bride for Prince Vladimir. While Dobrynya Nikitich was away, another *bogatyr,* the nasty-tongued Alyosha Popovitch, started a rumor that Dobrynya Nikitich had died during the journey. Everyone believed the gossip, and Prince Vladimir promised the hero's wife, Nastasya, to someone else. Dobrynya Nikitich returned when the wedding was in progress, stopped the ceremony, and "thumped" Alyosha Popovitch thoroughly for causing trouble.

See also: Bogatyr/Bogatyri; Bylina/Bylini; Kievan Cycle.

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Dogs

Dogs have been living with humans as helpers and companions for thousands of years. Dogs were among the first domesticated animals and are descendants of a more mysterious canine, the wolf. This duality may explain the mixed folklore and myths that exist about dogs. They are variously presented as friends to humans, supernatural entities, or even dark, menacing creatures.

Dogs were part of domestic life in ancient Egypt. They are depicted on many wall reliefs as hunters or pets. But the closest approximation to a true dog in Egyptian mythology is the god Anubis. This jackal-headed guardian of the afterlife guided the

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souls of the dead. Dogs were considered sacred to Anubis.

Dogs in Greek Mythology

In Greek mythology there was a powerful, supernatural watchdog, the three-headed Cerberus. This beast guarded the passage to the underworld. Only two mortals were able to get past Cerberus. The miraculous bard Orpheus used his music to charm Cerberus into letting him pass, and the hero Hercules took Cerberus captive.

Another dog in Greek mythology was the unfortunate Laelaps. This magical canine was destined to always catch its prey—until it tried to catch the Teumassian fox. This fox was destined never to be caught. The result of the chase was a paradox, which Zeus resolved by turning both animals to stone.

Greek mythology immortalized dogs in the constellations of Canis Major (Greater Dog) and Canis Minor (Lesser Dog). These dogs are said to be owned by the hunter Orion, whose constellation is nearby.

Argos was the name of Odysseus's dog in the *Odyssey* (c. 700 B.C.E.). Argos was the first to recognize his master when he returned from his epic travels, even though Odysseus was in disguise.

Aesop's fables include "The Dog in the Manger." In this tale, a greedy dog refuses to share, even though what he has grabbed is not edible.

Dogs of the British Isles

Great Britain has many tales of mythic or fairy dogs. In Welsh mythology, the Cwn Annwn, "Hounds of Annwn," are the white, red-eared hounds that belonged to Annwn, the ruler of the land of the dead. Fairy dogs are also usually depicted as white with red ears. An exception to this is the Cu Sith, or Fairy Hound, a large hound that is dark green and carries its long tail stylishly curled up.

Great Britain is rife with tales of phantom black dogs. Nearly every county has at least one example of such a beast. The black dog in Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902) was based on the folktale of a black dog on Dartmoor in Devon.

There is also a popular dog story attached to the town of Beddgelert in Wales. In this tale, a man comes home to find his baby's crib empty and blood on the mouth of the faithful family dog. Certain that the dog has murdered his baby, the man kills the dog. He finds out too late that the baby is safe under the crib and the blood was from a wolf the dog had killed. The town where this sad event is said to have occurred was named for the dog, Gelert.

Asian Canines

In China, Korea, and Japan dogs are generally seen as kindly and protective. This was not always good news for dogs in ancient times. It was customary in China and Japan to pour dog blood over the frame of a new house to protect it against evil or illness. In about 676 B.C.E., King Teh, the ruler of Ch'in, the kingdom that was to give China its name, had four dogs killed at the four gates of his city to ward off evil. A less gruesome custom was to wear straw images of dogs as protective amulets.

On Japan's Oki Islands, supernatural dogs were said to help wizards gain wealth. In the mythology of the Tinguian people of the Philippines, the supernatural dog called Kimat is the companion to Tadaklan, the god of thunder. The belief is that when Kimat bites, lightning strikes.

Other Traditions

The most important canine in Norse mythology is the terrible Fenris, although it is a wolf rather than a dog. Garm is a huge, four-eyed dog that is frequently described as being covered with blood. Garm guards the entrance of Helheim, land of the dead, for his mistress, Hel.

Supernatural guard dogs are found in many myths and stories. In Persian mythology, two four-eyed dogs guard the Chinvat Bridge, which leads to paradise. In Hindu myth, the Sun and Moon dogs guard Indra, the chief of the Vedic gods.

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Cerberus was the three-headed dog that guarded the entrance to Hades, the Greek underworld. In this image from a Greek vase dating to 575 B.C.E., Cerberus chases off an intruder. *(Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)*

Judaism and Islam view dogs as unclean scavengers. The term *dog* as an insult comes from Islamic tradition. In Christian belief, the dog represents faithfulness.

Urban Legend and Superstitions

In modern folk beliefs, dogs generally appear as heroes. "The Choking Doberman" is perhaps the best known of the urban tales about dogs: A family returns home to find their dog, usually a Doberman pinscher, choking on something. It turns out to be the finger of a burglar the dog attacked and chased off.

There are many superstitions about dogs:

- Dogs can see the supernatural (Wales, Scotland, China, Japan, and others).
- Dogs can foresee evil (Greece).
- Dogs can chase away evil spirits (China).
- If a dog whines at night, that means it sees Yama, the god of death, and there will be a death in the house (Punjabi).
- A dog howling or barking at night means a death in the house (worldwide).
- A dog howling at night predicts an earthquake (Japan).
- A dog that climbs onto a roof predicts fire (Japan).
- Black dogs are unlucky (Great Britain).
- White dogs are lucky and three white dogs together are even luckier (Great Britain).
- A strange dog visiting a house means a new friendship (Scotland).
- Meeting a spotted dog on the way to a business appointment is lucky (Great Britain).
- Dogs on a boat are unlucky (Great Britain and the United States).
- Dogs at a gambling table are unlucky (Great Britain).
- If a dog licks a newborn baby, the baby will be a quick healer (United States).
- Dogs protect babies from sickness (China).
- A dog's death means that its master has been spared from death (Philippines).

The history of dogs is closely linked to that of humans, and so dogs play roles in many stories and folk beliefs around the world.

See also: Anubis/Anpu; Black Dogs; Kludde; *Retelling: The Story of Gelert.*

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Domovoi/Domovois

(Russian)

Domovois were male house spirits that were said to live in Russian homes—usually the homes of peasants.

Domovois were not evil, but they could be mischievous or moody, particularly if the family in question failed to keep a clean house. If the family was good to the domovoi and treated the house well, keeping it properly clean and tidy, then the domovoi would serve as their protector.

A certain amount of respect had to be shown to the domovoi. In addition to keeping a clean house, people had to be careful to keep places like the center of the room and the threshold of the house clear at night, since that was when the domovoi liked to move about.

The various noises heard in a house at night were said to be the sounds of a domovoi, although he preferred to stay invisible. Moans or loud noises were a sure sign of a displeased domovoi, while sounds of music or laughter were good signs. Some of the domovoi's nighttime activities consisted of tending to the livestock and keeping outside spirits from intruding on and interfering with his family.

Although domovois preferred to remain invisible, they could take various forms as it pleased them, including anything from a frog to a copy of the human master of the house. If someone really did wish to see his or her domovoi, he or she had to wait until Holy Week or Easter Sunday. At this time, the individual had to take butter made from the milk of the first seven cows to be milked for the first time and smear it on his or her head, wear all new clothing and footwear to church, and, during the liturgical service, turn around. There and then, the domovoi would reveal himself.

A domovoi also could be prophetic. A sleeper rousing from slumber to feel a gentle hand touching him knew that he had received a sign of good fortune. If the touch was cold or rough, then bad fortune was imminent.

The domovoi had to be invited into a new home when a family moved. This was done by taking coals from the hearth of the old house and using them to start a fire in the hearth of the new house. It was also considered respectful for the head of the family to walk into the new house with bread and salt.

Today, some people still believe—or at least claim to believe—in the domovois. Homeowners sometimes make respectful offerings to them.

See also: Brownies; Slavic Mythology; Tomte/Tomten/Tomtar.

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Dongmyeongseong/Chumong

(Korean)

Dongmyeongseong, also called Chumong, was a Korean ruler who lived at the turn of the first century C.E. He was the founder of the Goguryeo Kingdom in 37 B.C.E. In Korean mythology, Dongmyeongseong was the son of Haemosu, the Sun deity, and of Yuhwa, the oldest daughter of the water deity, Habaek.

Haemosu impregnated Yuhwa, and she bore not a child but an egg from her left armpit. The king, understandably uneasy about this strangeness, tried to destroy the egg. But he could not. He eventually gave up and returned the egg to Yuhwa.

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Out of the egg hatched the young Dongmyeongseong, who could speak after only a month. He asked his mother for a bow and arrows and became a marvelous archer. When he was nearly grown, he often went hunting with the king's seven sons. When the princes caught just one deer, Dongmyeongseong would catch many. The eldest prince was envious and warned his father that this strange boy was dangerous.

Out into the World

The king tried to break Dongmyeongseong's spirit by ordering him to work as a stable boy. But the boy refused. He told his mother that as the son of a god, this was no way for him to live. He would, instead, head south and found his own kingdom. His mother agreed, and found a good horse for him. Dongmyeongseong fled south, but the king's troops followed him until he came to a great river that was impossible to cross.

Dongmyeongseong looked up to the heavens and cried that he was the son of Haemosu, the son-in-law of Habaek, and that the gods should have mercy on him and show him the way to cross. He struck the water with an arrow and all the turtles rose to the surface, forming a bridge. Dongmyeongseong quickly crossed the river. When he reached the other side, the turtles dove back down. All the men chasing him were drowned.

Once he was safely across the river, Dongmyeongseong had a chance to rest, so he took out his mother's parting gift. She had given him many different seeds of grain, but now he realized that he had lost the barley seed. At just that moment, a pigeon flew by, and Dongmyeongseong knew his mother had just sent him another barley seed. Sure enough, when his arrow brought down the bird, he found a barley seed in its beak. Dongmyeongseong put the pigeon into the water, and it was instantly returned to life and flew away. Dongmyeongseong knew that this was the place to found his nation, and so it came to be.

Defeat of Songyang

The land Dongmyeongseong chose already had a king, called Songyang. When the two met, Songyang challenged Dongmyeongseong to an archery contest.

Songyang ordered a servant to set a drawing of a deer a hundred paces away. Songyang took aim first, but his arrow missed the mark. Dongmyeongseong's arrow hit the target.

Dongmyeongseong ordered his servant to place a jade ring at a hundred paces away. Again, Songyang took aim first and missed. Dongmyeongseong broke the ring with a single arrow.

Songyang was defeated and Dongmyeongseong commanded the rain to fall. It poured down for seven days and washed away Songyang's palace. Dongmyeongseong's palace was erected in its place in another seven days. Thus he founded his kingdom.

See also: Culture Heroes; Habaek and Haemosu.

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Don't Count Your Chickens Before They Are Hatched

The adage "Don't count your chickens before they are hatched" is a lighthearted warning not to lose oneself in a daydream of what *might* be rather than actually doing something to achieve one's goals. Other phrases of this type include "chasing castles in the air," and "first catch your hare." Many other variants exist from around the world.

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The *Panchatantra* of India tells of a man who possessed a pot of gruel. He dreamed of selling the gruel during a famine and buying goats with the gold he would receive in exchange. His daydream continued: From the goats would come kids, which he would trade for cattle. The cattle would surely calve, and he would sell the calves and buy horses. This would lead to great wealth and a beautiful wife and son. But then the man dreamed that his wife ignored their son, so he kicked her to get her attention, and, in doing so, broke the pot and lost the gruel.

In a Swedish folktale, a boy came across a fox lying sound asleep. The boy daydreamed of killing the fox and selling its pelt in the market, then buying rye seed with the money. From the rye seed he would produce a fine crop. But then, he thought, people would want to steal the crop, and so he imagined warning people to stay away from his harvest. The boy shouted aloud, making so much noise that the fox woke up and zipped off into the forest. The boy was left with nothing.

One of Aesop's fables tells of a farmer's daughter who returned from milking the cows with a pail of milk balanced on her head. The girl daydreamed as she walked, thinking that from the milk would come cream, which she would churn into butter. Then, she thought, she would sell the butter to buy eggs, which would hatch and produce a fine yard of chickens. With the money from selling some of those chickens, she would buy a fine gown so that all the young men would come courting her. But she would just toss her head at them. And with that movement of her head, the pail and milk went flying. Aesop ended this tale, as usual, with a moral: Don't count your chickens before they are hatched.

See also: Tall Tales.

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Doomed Prince

(Egyptian)

The ancient Egyptian story of the doomed prince dates to the reign of Seti I or Ramses II (c. 1314–1237 B.C.E.). The tale contains several folk motifs, including "the child kept in a secret tower" and "the princess in the glass [or in this case stone] tower." The ultimate fate of the protagonist has not been preserved.

A king begged the gods for a son. When one was finally born to him, the Hathors, who were nature spirits that gathered to plan the life of a child, visited to declare the child's fate: "He will die by the crocodile, the snake, or the dog," they claimed. To protect his son, the king ordered a stone house to be built in the desert, and the boy was forbidden to leave the house.

The boy grew up with everything he desired, until one day, gazing down from his rooftop, he saw a man walking along with an unfamiliar animal. Upon learning it was a dog, the prince asked for one, and the king ordered that he should receive a puppy.

As a young man, the prince grew restless. The prince was fully aware of his decreed fate as he went out into the world. He traveled with a chariot, weapons, a servant, and his dog. He headed northwest and lived on wild game. Eventually, quite footsore, he came to the land of Naharin, also known as Mitanni, a kingdom situated on the upper reaches of the Euphrates River.

A number of Syrian princes were assembled there to vie for the hand of the princess of Naharin. The king kept his daughter in a house with windows that were 1,200 feet (approximately 70 Egyptian cubits) from the ground. She would be permitted to marry a man who was able to leap up to the windows. When the prince arrived, the Syrian suitors were practicing to accomplish this feat. The group welcomed the prince, who introduced himself as the son of an Egyptian officer and

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claimed that he was fleeing a wicked stepmother.

The youth rested his weary feet awhile, and when they had healed sufficiently, he too attempted to leap at the princess's window. He succeeded. The princess immediately fell in love with him, but her father became angry when he heard that the successful suitor was a mere fugitive from Egypt and not a prince. His daughter threatened to kill herself if the Egyptian was sent away or murdered. Upon meeting the dignified young man, the ruler of Naharin revised his opinion and accepted him as his son.

The prince and the princess lived in an estate, which the princess, whom the prince had told of his decreed fate, would not let him leave. She asked him to have the dog killed for fear that it would bring about his death. The prince scoffed at this, refusing to slay his childhood companion.

Unbeknownst to the prince, a crocodile had followed him from Egypt. It lived in a lake near the estate but was occupied fighting a demon.

The prince's other threat, the snake, approached him when he lay in a drunken sleep. His wife caught the snake by offering it beer, making it drunk, and having it cut into pieces. This turn of events pleased the prince.

Sometime later, while they were out walking around the estate, the dog announced, "I am your fate." The prince tried to escape by plunging into the lake, where the crocodile seized him. The crocodile offered the prince a bargain. If the prince agreed to help him defeat the demon, the crocodile would let him live. The prince agreed.

The conclusion of the tale has been lost, but it is generally assumed to have an ultimately satisfactory outcome for the prince.

See also: Tale Types.

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Doppelganger

The German word *doppelganger* means double-walker or, literally, double-goer. In folk belief, a doppelganger is a double—a normally invisible shadow-self that is said to accompany every human.

Different variants of this folk belief conflict as to what a doppelganger actually is. Sometimes the doppelganger is described as the human soul embodied. Other tales claim that it is an astral projection, the spirit temporarily leaving the body. It is also described as a shadowy being with a life of its own.

A doppelganger typically casts no reflection and can rarely be seen by anyone or anything other than the occasional dog or cat. It usually stands behind its human, occasionally whispering advice, both good and bad. It is bad luck for a doppelganger to be seen, particularly by its human counterpart: The sight of one's doppelganger is said to foretell imminent death.

Queen Elizabeth I of England is said to have seen a vision—possibly a doppelganger—while lying on her deathbed shortly before she died. The German author Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and the English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley also claimed to have seen their doubles. Catherine the Great of Russia saw her double heading toward her and simply had her soldiers shoot at it until it disappeared.

English folk belief states that those who want to know who in their village will die in the coming year need only wait near the church door on the night of April 24. This date marks the eve of the feast day of St. Mark. At midnight, the doubles of all those who will die in the coming year are said to file into the church in solemn procession. There is always the danger, of course, that observers will see their own doubles in this procession.

See also: Motifs.

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Dragons

The figure of the dragon, a large, powerful mythological creature, is familiar to people around the world. Dragons in mythology and literature guard global hoards of myths, epics, art, and history.

Dragons in the Ancient World

The tradition of dragons in Western civilization begins in the Middle East. Dragonlike creatures appear in some of the earliest creation myths, some of which date from between 2600 and 2000 B.C.E. The tales originated with the Sumerian civilization in Mesopotamia between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the area that is now Iraq and Iran. Ancient Middle Eastern dragons are of two types: the monsters that gods fight before creation and the monsters that heroes fight after creation.

In the Babylonian creation story called the "Enuma Elish," the dragonlike goddess Tiamat presided at the founding of the universe. She is a chthonic figure, or a creature of the deep Earth. Ultimately, one of Tiamat's offspring, called Marduk, opposed Tiamat. As she attempted to swallow him, Marduk shot an arrow into Tiamat's mouth and killed her. From her body, Marduk formed Earth, and so life resulted from the belly of the dragon that sought to end all life.

The Egyptians have a similar story in which either the sun god, Re, or the deity Seth conquered a snake (or dragon) called Apep. The Hittites have a tale of a storm god battling a dragon called Illuyankas.

Early illustrations of dragonlike creatures have been discovered throughout the Middle East. For example, in 600 B.C.E., King Nebuchadnezzar commissioned a Babylonian artist to create reliefs of animals on glazed bricks for the structures associated with the Ishtar Gate. Among the lions and bulls found on the blue-glazed brick are representations of a long-necked creature called a *sirrush*. Other representations of draconic life found on artifacts include a sixth-century urn from Caria in Asia Minor, an Egyptian seal bearing the cartouche of Thutmosis III from around 1400 B.C.E., and various mosaics from ancient Egypt and Rome.

Dragons in Greece

In Greek mythology, Zeus slew Typhon, an immortal of an earlier era that had a hundred snake heads, with his thunderbolt. Typhon left a descendent, Ladon, who also had a hundred heads and guarded the golden apples that grew in the garden of the Hesperides.

Other serpent-fighters in Greek mythology include the following:

- Apollo, the sun god, who fought Python, described variously as a giant snake or a female dragon with many coils, or the serpent that came to serve Apollo at his shrine at Delphi.
- Hercules, whose Twelve Labors included the destruction of the dragons Ladon and Hydra.
- Perseus, who killed a sea monster sent by the god Poseidon to avenge an insult.
- Jason, who killed the dragon that guarded the Golden Fleece.
- Cadmus, subsequently the founder of Thebes, who fought and killed a golden-crested dragon at the spring of Ares and created his city's population from the dragon's teeth.

Dragons in the Bible

The word *dragon* appears many times in the Bible. The influence of old Sumerian and Akkadian creation myths as well as Babylonian

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stories is evident in the Book of Genesis. The Babylonians described "Tiamat, the old dragon whose movements cause the chaotic stirring of the ocean." Babylon's chief god, Marduk, killed Tiamat. Also in the Old Testament, Elohim killed the creature known as Leviathan.

Leviathan is also mentioned in the Book of Isaiah: "In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish Leviathan the piercing serpent, even Leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea." Similar mentions of Leviathan and another sea monster, Behemoth, appear elsewhere in the Old Testament.

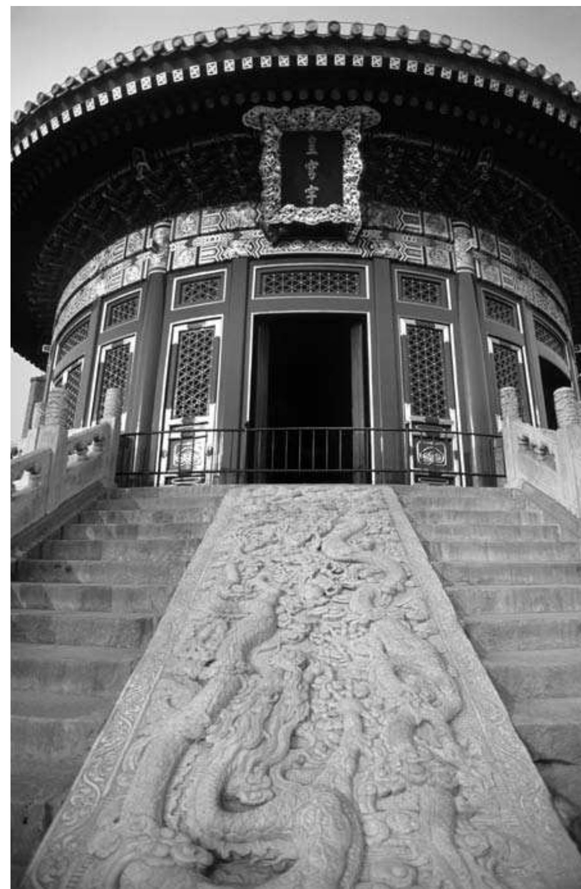
Throughout the Old Testament, the terminology and imagery relating to draconic creatures is similar to that of the Mesopotamian creation myths. Hebrew adaptations of these old stories include the battle of God against the water dragons of Chaos in Psalms and Job: As in the Mesopotamian myths, the death of the monster is necessary for the creation and survival of the world. The book of Daniel describes a creature with ten horns, with eyes "like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things." The beast is slain in an earthly battle that probably was meant to prophesy the battle at the end of the world.

Dragons are also found in the New Testament. The book of Revelation contains twelve references, including a description of "a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his head"; a dragon ready to devour a newborn child; the "war in heaven," in which "Michael and his angels fought against the dragon"; and references to unclean spirits coming out of a dragon's mouth. Also in Revelation, the parallel of the dragon with evil is explicit: "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years."

Dragons of the East and Polynesia

Unlike the fear and loathing felt toward dragons in Western cultures, most Eastern dragons, primarily those of Chinese and Japanese traditions, are considered beautiful, usually friendly toward humans, and often exceedingly wise. Eastern dragons generally vary in color from gold to green, with a few that are blue or other colors. Some have wings while others have alternating short and long spines down their backs and along their tails.

Instead of being hated, these dragons are revered. The celestial dragon was the symbol of China until the coming of communism, and Chinese people referred to themselves as *lung tik chuan ren,* or descendents of the dragon. In both China and Japan, it was believed that these supernatural beings controlled the rain and all manner of flowing water, from rivers to oceans. Temples and shrines were built to honor dragons along the banks of rivers and the Pacific shore. One famous Chinese shrine



Dragons are benevolent beings in Chinese and Japanese mythology. They rule the air, water, and earth. This passageway, carved with images of dragons, is part of the Temple of Heaven in Beijing, China. *(Vanni/Art Resource, NY)*

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near modern Beijing was the Black Dragon Pool Chapel, which was reserved for the empress and her court.

Eastern dragons have positive associations, from the lucky year of the dragon in Chinese astrology to their ability to ward off evil beings. Yet these creatures are portrayed as rather vain and are insulted if their advice is not heeded or if they are not honored properly. When angered, they might withhold the rain or bring floods.

Male dragons were said to mate with other kinds of animals. A dragon that mated with a pig would sire an elephant, while the union of a dragon with a mare would result in a racehorse.

Tradition says that both male and female dragons mated with humans and that their descendents became powerful rulers. The Japanese emperor Hirohito, who ruled during World War II, traced his ancestry over a hundred generations to Princess Fruitful Jewel. She was said to have been the daughter of a dragon-king of the sea.

Many emperors in China also claimed to have dragon ancestors, so the term *dragon* was commonly used to describe them and their belongings: dragon throne, dragon bed, dragon robe, and so on. It was said that the emperors consulted with dragons on how to govern mankind. The Chinese imperial dragon is the only one with five claws instead of four. Under penalty of death, no one other than the emperor was permitted to wear a depiction of a five-clawed dragon.

Chinese Dragons

There are several major types of Chinese dragons: the horned dragon; the winged dragon; the coiling dragon, which lives in water; the yellow dragon, which once emerged from water and presented the legendary Emperor Fu Hsi with the elements of writing; the celestial dragon, which supports and protects the mansions of the gods; the spiritual dragon, which generates wind and rain for the benefit of mankind; the dragon of hidden treasures, which keeps guard over concealed wealth; and the dragon king, which consists of four separate dragons, each of which rules over one of the four seas—east, south, west, and north.

Carp fish that successfully leaped over waterfalls were thought to change into fish-dragons. A popular Chinese saying is, "The carp has leaped through the dragon's gate." This refers to someone's success and often is applied to students who have passed their exams.

In Chinese mythology, the first humans were created by a goddess named Nu Kua, who was part dragon and part human. Nu Kua was ancestress to a line of dragons that could appear in human and animal shape as well as in dragon form.

Even today, dragon lanterns, dragon boats, and dragon dances—especially in Lunar New Year celebrations—are an important and beloved part of Chinese folk culture.

Other Eastern and Polynesian Dragons

In Japan, Ryujin (Luminous Being) is the dragon god of the sea. He lives in the palace called Ryugu at the bottom of the sea. Ryujin controls the tides with magical gems, his messengers are sea turtles, and his daughter Otohime married a human.

The Korean dragon god of the sea is called Yongwang. Korean folklore claims that the dragons of this culture are the original dragons.

In the Hindu myths of India, a serpent dragon called Vitra coiled around a mountain and absorbed the cosmic waters from the universe. To bring water to gods and humanity, Indra, the storm god, battled Vitra, killing him with a thunderbolt and releasing the waters of life.

In Indian Buddhism, the dragon Apalala lived in the Swat River and was converted by the Buddha. Apalala attempted to convert the other dragons, but they drove him away.

In the Pacific Islands, specifically in Borneo, a dragon named Kinabalu was said to live at the summit of Mount Kinabalu. He guarded an immense pearl that the emperor of China coveted.

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In Hawaii, the mother of all dragons is called Mo-o-inanea, which means the self-reliant dragon. She is said to have brought dragons to Hawaii. She lived on the island as a demigoddess, sometimes in dragon form and sometimes as a woman.

Dragons in Medieval Europe

In Christian iconography, the archangel Michael is the dragon fighter. Some medieval saints, including Saint Martha of Bethany and Saint George of Anatolia, also defeated dragons. The latter was an early fourth-century martyr who became England's patron saint and warrior symbol.

The story of Saint George and the dragon is probably the most famous account of dragons in Europe. The story has two principal versions. In the first, a dragon appeared at the village of Cappadocia and threatened to destroy the region. At first, the dragon fed off the village's sheep. Eventually the villagers sacrificed maidens to the dragon, until only the princess remained. She was tied to a stake when Saint George happened by and killed the dragon. In the other version of the story, instead of killing the dragon, Saint George lectured him on how evil it is to eat people and how much better it would be if he became a Christian. Saint George and the princess then leashed the dragon and led him back to the town. The dragon was officially converted and then left the area. In a variation on this version, Saint George led the dragon back to town but then killed him.

The French dragon Tarasque was said to be bigger than twelve elephants, with teeth the size of swords, scales harder than iron, and breath of fire. Tarasque destroyed or drove off all the knights and heroes that attempted to slay her. After twenty-one years, Saint Martha arrived dressed in white and armed only with faith and a jar of holy water. She led Tarasque into the town, where the dragon was hacked to pieces. A church was built in Saint Martha's honor, and the town's name was changed to Tarascon, after its local dragon.

In Western mythology, dragons usually are seen as evil beings. Saint George is shown killing a dragon with his lance in this painting by Italian Vittore Carpaccio (1455–1525). *(© Cameraphoto/Art Resource, NY)*

Dragons in Germany and Scandinavia

While dragons in German folklore and mythology tend to be hostile to humans, there is one notable exception. In Heidelberg, local tradition claimed that the dragons who once lived in the area were friendly and even allowed some people to ride them. The female dragons were said to help fishermen. There was also a race of dwarf flying dragons that lived on the warm hillsides. The stories claim that Heidelberg's dragons were driven out by the church.

A more traditional dragon, Fafnir, appears in the Norse epic the *Völsunga Saga* and the closely related German *Nibelungenlied*. In the *Völsunga Saga,* Fafnir was originally a dwarf, but his lust for gold turned him into the dragon that was eventually slain by the hero Siegfried.

Dragons in England

After ruling for twenty years, the hero of *Beowulf,* the eleventh-century Old English epic, faced a dragon. Beowulf learned of a dragon that had lived underground in a barrow by the sea for 300 winters, terrorizing the people by filling the night skies with flame. The dragon had amassed a great hoard of treasure, but a thief had stolen a gold cup. The dragon woke,

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realized that the cup was missing, and rose, circling his barrow restlessly. At nightfall the dragon flew out and burned down homes for miles around.

The news of this destruction was brought to Beowulf. He prepared to battle the dragon. Armed with an iron shield, because he knew that a wooden one would not withstand a dragon's fire, Beowulf went to the dragon's barrow. Beowulf ordered his men to remain behind and entered the barrow, shouting a challenge. Upon hearing a human voice, the dragon attacked. Its fire struck Beowulf's shield, which held only long enough for him to strike the dragon a blow that failed to kill it. For the first time in his life, Beowulf had to retreat.

The dragon pursued the hero, renewing its fire. Beowulf's comrades fled, except for Wiglaf, a young noble who bravely entered the barrow. Beowulf attacked again, but this time Naegling, his ancient sword, snapped. Seizing its opportunity, the dragon caught Beowulf in a rush of flame and sank its fangs into his neck. Wiglaf charged and struck the dragon's belly with his sword, causing its fire to diminish. The mortally wounded Beowulf drew a knife and killed the dragon. Giving his torque, his mail, and his helm to Wiglaf, the last of his kin, Beowulf died.

In the *History of the Kings of Britain,* the twelfth-century cleric, historian, and storyteller Geoffrey of Monmouth recounted stories of Merlin and his prophecies. As a youth, Merlin, who had no father, was brought before the Celtic King Vortigern, whose sages had foretold that only the sacrifice of a fatherless boy could stop the collapse of the royal fortress.

The boy Merlin avoided being sacrificed when he had a vision of a cave beneath the fortress with a pool within it. In the pool were two dragons, one red and one white, which woke and began to fight. The red dragon overcame the white dragon. Merlin explained his vision to the king: The white dragon symbolized the Saxon invaders and the red dragon symbolized Britain, the Pendragon line, and the coming of King Arthur. Merlin's prophesies came true.

Dragons and Modern Literature

Some of the most fully realized dragons in modern fantasy are found in the works of the English author J.R.R. Tolkien. His novella *Farmer Giles of Ham* (1949) includes a dragon called Chrysophylax Dives. This dragon has the power of speech, a certain low cunning, and a fondness for caves and hoards. Chrysophylax is tamed by a farmer who becomes a king.

Another well portrayed dragon is Smaug in *The Hobbit* (1937). Although Smaug, like Chrysophylax, has the gift of speech, enjoys riddles, and has a certain sarcastic humor, it is very much a dragon in the medieval tradition. Smaug lives in a cave beneath the earth, guards a hoard, and is hostile to anyone who disturbs it or its treasure. As in *Beowulf,* a burglar rouses the dragon, and it destroys Lake Town. Smaug is killed by Bard of Lake Town, a descendant of the old kings. This deed is taken by the people of Lake Town as proof that Bard should become king.

J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter book series (1997–2007) contains a number of "classic" dragons. The author has enhanced her descriptions of the dragons by creating new and witty dragon taxonomy.

Another modern invention is the friendly dragon, such as Puff in the folk song "Puff the Magic Dragon" (1963) by Peter, Paul, and Mary. Another friendly dragon is featured in the current science fiction series Dragonriders of Pern, by author Anne McCaffrey.

In Ursula K. Le Guin's novels of Earthsea, the dragons are less "tame" than McCaffrey's dragons. Le Guin's dragons are a combination of Western and Eastern traditions. They are associated with water, can speak, and can serve as benefactors or turn on people and incinerate or devour them. Le Guin emphasizes not just dragons' transcendent beauty but also their role as symbols of magic and enchantment.

Susan M. Shwartz and Josepha Sherman

See also: Dragon-Slayer; Typhon; Zmeys and Zmeyitsas.

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Dragon-Slayer

(European)

Folktales in which a hero slays a dragon are common in Europe and North America.

The hero, or occasionally the heroine, may be of either noble or common birth. Often the hero has one or more animal helpers, usually dogs or horses, as companions. The dragon-slayer's motivation might be the need to save a princess or a kingdom, or, occasionally, the desire to gain the dragon's treasure.

The dragon usually breathes fire, may have more than one head, and is sometimes able to fly. It may or may not be able to speak, but is always hostile toward humans. The dragon imperils the land with flame or devours people or their livestock. Often it possesses a hoard of treasure. Other heroes already may have died trying to slay the monster. The hero in these tales is often the only one who will dare to confront the dragon.

Another element of these stories is a sacrifice, most often the princess, who is to be the dragon's meal or, less often, the dragon's bride. Her purity usually is stressed and her hand in marriage is often promised to her liberator. She may be the last in a line of sacrifices of more common-born maidens, or she may have volunteered to save the other young women.

When the hero meets up with the dragon, there is a fight to the death in which the hero always wins. The hero may win on his own or with the aid of the princess or his animal helpers. When there is a heroine, she may use trickery to weaken the dragon, possibly getting him drunk, or she may pretend to be the sacrificial maiden so that she can get close enough to slay him.

The story often ends with the death of the dragon, but some variants add a further complication. The hero may cut out the dragon's tongue or take its head to prove he killed it, and then fall asleep from exhaustion. An imposter, someone who is jealous of the hero or desiring of fame or the princess, may claim to be the dragon-slayer, only to be proven a liar when the hero reveals his token of victory.

Perhaps one of the best-known stories of this type is that of Saint George and the dragon. Saint George, the patron saint of England, was likely a soldier in the Roman army about 300 C.E. He saved a princess from being sacrificed to a dragon and led the dragon into the city using the princess's belt as a leash. Some versions of the story have him convert the dragon to Christianity. Other versions have him simply slay the dragon.

See also: Dragons; Tale Types.

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Dumuzi

(Sumerian)

The Sumerian shepherd god Dumuzi, known as Tammuz in the Bible, was the patron and protector of mortal shepherds and

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son of the sheep goddess, Duttur. In the Sumerian kings list, an ancient text listing the kings of Sumer, he is identified as a shepherd-king who lived just after the great flood. In myths, Dumuzi was known as a fertility god.

The Sumerian Text

In the Sumerian poem "Dispute Between the Shepherd and the Farmer," Dumuzi, the pastoralist, and Enkimdu, the god of irrigation and cultivation, were both suitors for the hand of the goddess Inanna. The god Utu, Inanna's brother, favored the shepherd, citing him as a good provider. But Inanna preferred the farmer. Dumuzi responded by claiming his animal products were better than the farmer's produce.

The two suitors met on a riverbank, and Dumuzi provoked a quarrel. Enkimdu, who was the god-king of the dyke and canal, refused to compete any further. Dumuzi, confident that he would win the hand of the goddess, offered friendship to his foe. Enkimdu accepted the offer and said he would bring wheat and beans and barley from the threshing floor to Dumuzi. As for Inanna, he would bring her whatever she pleased. Though the end of this story has been lost, it is clear from other stories that Dumuzi marries Inanna.

Dumuzi's Dream

The death of the shepherd god is recounted in several myths. In the poem "Dumuzi's Dream," the god went out into the countryside, where he had a terrible dream. Terrified, he called upon his sister, Geshtinana, to interpret it for him. She told him that the dream foretold his death. Dumuzi was then hunted by evil demons. He fled into the tall grasslands, telling only his sister and a friend of his hiding place. His sister remained loyal, but his friend, who was bribed by the demons, revealed his whereabouts.

The demons encircled Dumuzi as if he were an animal and tried to snare him in their nets. Finally, they captured and bound him. Dumuzi prayed to the sun god, Utu, reminding him that he was his brother-in-law and appealing to his sense of family obligation. Dumuzi asked Utu to turn him into a gazelle so that he could swiftly flee from the demons. Utu showed mercy and changed Dumuzi into a gazelle. Dumuzi escaped, but the demons pursued and captured him again.

Once again Dumuzi appealed to Utu, who changed him back into a man. Dumuzi escaped the demons and sought refuge at the home of an old woman. Entering her house, he told her that he was not just a man but the husband of a goddess. He asked for food and drink and begged for help.

After pouring out water for him and sprinkling flour, the old woman left the house. When the demons came near and saw the woman outside, they reasoned that Dumuzi must be inside the house. They captured him and once again bound his hands and arms. Dumuzi raised his hands toward heaven and repeated his prayer to Utu. Utu again turned him into a gazelle and helped him to escape.

Finally, Dumuzi sought refuge in the sheepfold of his sister, Geshtinana. Upon seeing him approaching, Geshtinana began to scream. Her outcry was so loud that it covered the heavens. She lacerated her eyes, face, ears, and buttocks. All of her wailing attracted the attention of the demons. One by one, seven demons entered the sheepfold. They destroyed the animals and killed the shepherd god.

Dumuzi in the Underworld

Dumuzi's entrance into the underworld is recounted in the Sumerian myth *The Descent of Ishtar*. The goddess Ishtar, the Akkadian counterpart of Inanna, decided to go to the netherworld, a place of no return. There she was stripped naked, like a dead person, and turned into a corpse to be hung on a hook like a piece of meat.

Revived by magical attendants sent to the netherworld by the god Enki, Ishtar was permitted to leave on condition that she would provide a substitute in her place. Arriving back in heaven, she found that her husband,

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Dumuzi, was dressed in festive rather than mourning garments.

Determined to punish him for such insolence, she designated Dumuzi as her substitute. Demons attempted to bring him to the netherworld. Once again, as in the poem "Dumuzi's Dream," the shepherd god appealed to his brother-in-law, the sun god, Utu, for aid. Utu came to Dumuzi's rescue and helped him escape.

The text is broken at this point, but it appears that Dumuzi was recaptured, made a prisoner, and returned to the netherworld. Ishtar, who now repented, wept bitterly for her husband, but to no avail. Dead in the netherworld, he was left to spend six months of the year there, alternating his term of imprisonment with his sister, Geshtinana.

Other Tales of Dumuzi

In a poem called "Inanna and Bilulu," the goddess seeks revenge against an old woman known as Bilulu. Inanna believed that Bilulu had killed her beloved Dumuzi. She killed the old woman and turned her into a water skin to hold cold water when traveling in the desert. Thenceforth, Inanna was a protective goddess of the desert.

Dumuzi's residence in the underworld was also mentioned in the Sumerian myth *The Death of Gilgamesh*. The role of Gilgamesh, the Sumerian hero-king, is equated with that of Dumuzi.

Dumuzi is also featured in the Akkadian myth of Adapa. After being called to account due to his misguided action against the south wind, Adapa is ordered to appear in heaven, where he encounters Dumuzi as a gatekeeper to heaven.

Storytellers can use these myths in several ways, emphasizing the feminist elements of Ishtar's quest, and even the shamanistic parallels. In addition, Dumuzi should be familiar to those who are familiar with the Greek tale of Persephone, but the Sumerian tales also can make exciting telling on their own.

See also: Adon/Adonis; Inanna/Ishtar.

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Ears

While King Midas of Greek mythology is best known for his nearly fatal touch of gold, he is also known for a peculiar aspect of his anatomy—animal ears. This folk motif occurs in stories from other parts of the world as well. Some sample tales follow.

King Midas Has Donkey Ears (Greek)

When King Midas made the mistake of questioning the god Apollo's musical judgment, the angry deity gave him the ears of a donkey. The mortified king hid them under a turban. Like every other man, Midas needed the services of a barber, so the royal barber was sworn under penalty of death not to reveal the truth about the royal ears.

But the secret wore and wore on the barber until he found it too much to bear to keep such a secret. So he went out into the meadow and dug a hole in the ground. Stooping down, he whispered the story, covered it up, and then went on his way, greatly relieved to be rid of the secret.

But that was not the end of the matter. Before long, a thick bed of reeds sprang up in the meadow, particularly over the spot where the hole had been. As soon as the reeds had gained full growth, they began whispering, "King Midas has donkey ears," and have kept doing it for all to hear from that day to this.

King Mark's Ears/King March's Ears (Welsh and Breton)

King March, whose English name is Mark, had horse's ears. Nobody knew this except for his barber. The barber dared not tell this secret to anyone or he would, so the king had warned, lose his head.

The secret weighed and weighed on the barber, making him quite ill. When the doctor discovered that it was not disease but a secret that was killing the barber, he told the barber to confess the secret to the earth.

The barber did as the doctor ordered, and he soon became well. Fair reeds grew in that place, and at the time of a high feast, the pipers of Maelgwn Gwynedd, now northern Wales, came there and saw the fair reeds. The musicians cut the fair reeds, made them into pipes, and played the pipes before the king. But all those pipes would play was "King March of Merichion has horse's ears."

The Emperor Has Goat's Ears (Serbian)

Once upon a time, there lived an emperor whose name was Trojan, and he had ears like

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a goat. Every morning, when he was shaved, he asked if the man saw anything odd about him. Each barber replied that the emperor had goat's ears and was at once ordered to be put to death.

After this state of things had lasted a good while, there was hardly a barber left in the town to shave the emperor, save for one apprentice barber. The poor young man noticed the emperor's goat ears, but when the emperor asked him the usual question about anything odd about his appearance, the apprentice wisely said that he noticed nothing odd. This pleased the emperor, who promptly made the young apprentice his personal barber.

From this time on, the apprentice went regularly up to the palace, receiving each morning twelve ducats in payment. But after a while, his secret, which he had carefully kept, burned within him, and he longed to tell it to somebody. At last he went to a meadow outside the town, dug a deep hole, then knelt and whispered to it three times over, "The Emperor Trojan has goat's ears." And as he said this, a great burden seemed to roll off him. He shoveled the earth carefully back and ran lightly home.

Weeks passed, and there sprang up in the hole an elder tree with three stems, all as straight as poplars. A shepherd cut one stem and made a flute out of it. But all the flute would play was, "The Emperor Trojan has goat's ears."

Of course, it was not long before the whole town knew of this wonderful flute and what it said, and, at last, the news reached the emperor in his palace. He immediately sent for the apprentice and accused him of telling tales.

The apprentice frantically tried to explain that all he had done was to whisper the words to the earth. The emperor commanded his coach to be made ready, took the youth with him, and drove to the spot, for he wished to see for himself whether the young man's confession was true. Sure enough, when another stem was cut and made into a flute, all it would play was, "The Emperor Trojan has goat's ears."

Then the emperor knew that even the earth gave up its secrets. He granted the young man his life.

The Prince with Ox Ears (India)

Once upon a time, a fine young son was born to a certain raja—but the child had the ears of an ox. The raja kept this shame a secret, and made the royal barber vow not to tell anyone of what he had seen.

So the barber went away, but the secret that he might not tell had an unfortunate effect. It made his stomach swell to an enormous size. As the barber went along in this unhappy condition, he met a low-caste drummer who asked why his stomach was so swollen. The barber said that it was because he had shaved the raja's child and had seen that it had the ears of an ox. As soon as he had blurted out the secret, his stomach returned to its usual size.

The drummer cut down a tree and made a drum out of the wood. He went about playing on the drum and begging. He came to the raja's palace, where he drummed and sang, "The son of the raja has the ears of an ox."

When the raja heard this, he was very angry and swore to punish the barber, who must have broken his vow. But the drummer assured the raja that he knew nothing about the barber, that it was the drum that sang the words, not he, and that he had no idea what they meant. So the raja was pacified, and the barber was not punished.

Why this particular tale type should be so popular is unknown, but it certainly is a world tale. A storyteller could very easily add a lesser-known version to the repertoire.

See also: Tale Types.

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El Cid

(Spanish)

The historic El Cid was the Spanish nobleman and military leader Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar. His popular name, El Cid, means *lord.* At least a century after de Vivar's death, an unknown Spanish author wrote an epic poem about his exploits. *El Poema de Mio Cid*—literally the *Poem of My Cid,* but more often translated in English as *The Song of the Cid*—made de Vivar a national hero in the centuries-long fight against Muslim control of Spain.

De Vivar was born about 1043, at which time Spain was partitioned between the Christians and the Moors, who were Muslims from North Africa. He was raised in the court of King Ferdinand I, where he soon proved his military ability and became a mercenary, acting independently of any royal control. De Vivar worked for the Muslim rulers of Saragossa and then went on to conquer the Moorish kingdom of Valencia in 1094. He ruled Valencia until his death in 1099.

The Song of the Cid recounts and embellishes many historic events. The fictional El Cid is an exemplary hero and vassal, and an ideal medieval Spanish lord. He is a Christian hero, subject to a Christian king.

The first part of the poem is titled "Cantar del Destierro" ("Song of the Exile"). The hero, accompanied by family members and retainers, was sent into exile by Alfonso VI. This was to punish the Cid for accusing Alfonso of gaining the crown by murdering his brother, Sancho. After leaving his family in the care of the abbot of Cardeña, the Cid departed to fight the Moors. Alfonso's heart softened toward the Cid after he received quantities of booty from the hero's conquests.

In the second portion, called "Cantar de las Bodas" ("Song of the Marriage"), the Cid conquered Valencia and settled his family there. Both of the Cid's daughters were married to princes at the request of the king. Though he did not care for these young men, the hero would not refuse his lord's wishes.

In the last portion of the epic, "Cantar de la Afrenta de Corpes" ("Song of the Insult of Corpses"), the sons-in-law of the Cid were proven to be cowards. In humiliation, they beat their wives to the point of death. The Cid sought redress for these assaults, which the king eventually provided, and the daughters were wed to better men, from the noble houses of Aragon and Navarre.

El Cid, the hero, was an ideal lord—generous to his followers and respectful of them. No mention is made in the epic of the Cid fighting as a mercenary for the Moors. Instead, he gains territory for his king at their expense.

In short, in *The Song of the Cid,* the historic man is turned into the perfect hero for medieval Spain.

See also: Culture Heroes; Epics.

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Elf Shot/Elf Arrow

(British)

British folk tradition claims that elves shot cursed or toxic stone arrowheads at humans. Elf shot also refers to a disease, probably stroke, which was caused by such an arrow wound.

This folk belief grew up around the Neolithic flint arrowheads that have been found throughout Great Britain and parts of Europe. Many of these arrowheads, especially those known by archaeologists as bird shot, were small and finely worked. Nonscientists who came upon these artifacts attributed them to the fairy folk. Some people even claimed that

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the arrowheads were designed to break off from the shaft and embed themselves in a human body.

During the witch trials in Great Britain, bizarre elements were added to this story, such as a team of elf-boys working on the arrowheads under the supervision of the devil.

See also: Abatwa.

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Elm Trees

Elm trees are featured throughout the world's mythology and folklore. The elm is presented as more sinister than many other trees that are mentioned in myth. It has a strong connection with death and the underworld.

In Greek mythology, the bard Orpheus broke a vow, causing his wife, Eurydice, to spend eternity in the underworld. Orpheus had rescued her and had been instructed by Hades, god of the underworld, not to turn back to look at her. He could not help himself and broke the promise, so she returned to death. The first elm tree is said to have sprouted on the spot where she met this fate.

Celtic mythology associated elm trees with the underworld, as well as with the otherworld of faerie. Elms were said to grow near any passages leading out of this world to either the underworld or the otherworld.

May Day dances in Britain were held around the so-called Dancing Elms of Devon. These celebrations were strongly linked to fertility, so elm trees were linked to both life and death.

The wych elm, a species also known as Scots elm, was not named for any association with witchcraft. The ancient word *wych* refers to elm wood's pliability. But folk belief still claimed that witches shunned elm trees.

People have always been wary of elm trees, due to their habit of dropping large boughs without warning. In time, a folk belief evolved that the trees deliberately dropped their limbs and tried to kill humans below. The saying "Elm hateth man, and waiteth" arose from this belief. Another claimed that "elum do hate" those who walk out late.

Elm trees also have folk medicinal values. The inner bark is still used to treat colds and sore throats, while boiled bark was sometimes used to treat burns.

See also: Apple Trees; Ash Trees.

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Eloquent Peasant, Tale of the

(Egyptian)

The entire *Tale of the Eloquent Peasant* has been preserved in separate parts among four papyri that date from between 2061 and 1665 B.C.E. This story, about the peasant Khun-Anup, raises important questions about the role of deities in the granting of justice. The text contains irony and even satire.

Khun-Anup, a peasant who lived in the Wadi Natrun region of Egypt, loaded up his donkeys with goods and walked to the Nile Valley to trade his wares. Along the riverbank, he met a man named Nemty-Nakht, who coveted the birds, herbs, and other items Khun-Anup had brought. Nemty-Nakht had his servant stretch a cloth in the roadway. Rather than walk on the linen, Khun-Anup drove his donkeys into the field, and Nemty-Nakht accused him of trespassing. As the two men

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argued, one of Khun-Anup's donkeys took a mouthful of Nemty-Nakht's barley. Nemty-Nakht accused the peasant of stealing his barley, and he seized the donkeys and their load as repayment for the loss. When Khun-Anup threatened to go to the high steward, Rensi, Nemty-Nakht beat him.

For ten days, Khun-Anup pleaded with Nemty-Nakht to return his donkeys and goods, to no avail. So Khun-Anup went on to the town where Rensi lived. Rensi heard his complaint and denounced Nemty-Nakht to the magistrates, who were not sympathetic. They believed that Khun-Anup was one of Nemty-Nakht's peasants with an unjustified gripe.

Khun-Anup praised Rensi most poetically, pleading with him to settle the case. Rensi was so impressed with the peasant's eloquence that he reported the incident to King Nebkaure. Intrigued, the king ordered Rensi not to give an answer to the peasant. Instead, Rensi was instructed to keep Khun-Anup pleading and record his speeches. Rensi was also to provide the peasant and his family with what they needed, without letting them know the source of their good fortune.

Khun-Anup made eight more petitions before Rensi, who did not reply until after the third petition. The response was the order that Khun-Anup should be beaten. In each petition, the peasant praised those who upheld *maat* (truth, justice, rightful order) and criticized those who turned their backs on it. Khun-Anup's pleas become more desperate and personal. By the eighth petition, he called Rensi selfish and a thief. Rensi, he said, might be an important man of wealth, but maat is eternal. Khun-Anup begged Rensi to speak and to follow maat.

Finally, at the end of his ninth petition, Khun-Anup accused the high steward of not listening. Unable to find justice, Khun-Anup announced that he would complain to the god of the dead, Anubis. (Certain scholars have interpreted this as a reference to suicide.) At this point, Rensi ordered the guards to bring Khun-Anup in to see him. The peasant was afraid that this would be the end of him.

Rensi had Khun-Anup's speeches read aloud and brought to the king. King Nebkaure was greatly pleased by the peasant's fine words. At last, the king ordered Rensi to make judgment in the case. Khun-Anup not only recouped what he lost to Nemty-Nakht but was awarded some of his accuser's belongings.

Noreen Doyle

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Enki/Ea

(Sumerian)

The Mesopotamian god known as Enki in Sumerian and Ea in Akkadian was the god of the subterranean freshwaters, which were called the *abzu*. In Sumerian and Akkadian mythology, he was a wise god and determiner of destinies. Enki was also the deity of magic and incantations, and he played a role in the creation myth.

Enki is sometimes described as the son of the sky god, An. Other myths identify him as the offspring of Enlil, god of the winds and wisdom. At other times, he is the issue of the goddess of the sea, Nammu.

Enki's main cult center, called E-abzu (Abzu House), was located in the southern Mesopotamian city of Eridu. The temple, according to a Sumerian tradition, was the oldest shrine in Mesopotamia. In the Sumerian myth *Enki's Journey to Nippur,* the shrine was described as built from precious metal and lapis lazuli.

An early second-millennium Sumerian tale, *Enki and Ninhursanga,* described a sacred land called Dilmun, in which "the raven was not yet cawing, the partridge not cackling. The lion did not slay, the wolf was not carrying off lambs, the dog had not been taught to make kids curl up, the pig had not learned that grain was to

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be eaten." This land was virginal and pristine, a place where there was no disease, death, or old age.

The latter part of the story revolves around Enki, the mother goddess Ninhursanga, and their offspring and descendants, all of whom Enki impregnated. One descendant, the spider goddess Uttu, had Enki's semen removed by Ninhursanga. From this seed, eight plants grew that Enki devoured, causing him great pain. Ninhursanga then healed Enki and gave birth to eight divinities. The composition ends with Enki assigning destinies to each of his offspring. Other stories about Enki and creation are found in two other Sumerian compositions, *Enki and Ninmah* and *Enki and the World Order.*

Enki was depicted in art as a water god, friendly to humanity, with streams of freshwater flowing from his shoulders to the ground. In the myth of Atra-hasis, Enki helped the mortal hero Atra-hasis to avoid the dire consequences of plague, famine, and flood. In the epic story of Gilgamesh, Enki helped the hero Uta-napishti to escape the flood and gain immortality.

A Sumerian myth, *Enki and Inanna,* tells of the attempt by Inanna, the goddess of sex and love and daughter of Enki, to visit her father in his temple at Eridu. Her goal was to obtain greater powers through possession of the *me* (pronounced *may*), the divine standards that underlie human civilization. Inanna received the me from her father while he was drunk. In spite of Enki's attempts to stop her, she brought them to her home city of Uruk. It is unknown whether Enki ever got the me back.

Enki fits into the general storytelling archetype of the trickster.

Ira Spar

See also: Flood, The; Wise Man or Woman.

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Enkidu

(Sumerian)

In Sumerian mythology dating from between 3000 and 1000 B.C.E., Enkidu was described as the servant of the king and hero Gilgamesh. In later Akkadian stories, Enkidu was a friend of Gilgamesh.

The most common version of the stories states that the young King Gilgamesh was wild and dangerous, causing fights and despoiling women. His behavior caused his people to pray to the gods for help.

The gods created Enkidu as a wild man who lived in the forest with the animals. He was tamed when a woman was sent to him. He lay with her and learned that he was human.

In a test of strength, Enkidu and Gilgamesh wrestled fiercely. When the fight ended, the two became fast friends. Enkidu helped Gilgamesh in several adventures, including the destruction of the monstrous Humbaba and the recovery of lost objects from the underworld. Enkidu was slain by the gods to punish Gilgamesh for his arrogance. When Enkidu died, Gilgamesh began his quest for immortality.

Enkidu has been interpreted as a symbol of the loss of innocence or the separation of humanity from nature. He was also the first in a long line of wild man characters, including the modern fictional heroes Mowgli, of Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book* (1894), and Tarzan, created by Edgar Rice Burroughs around 1912.

See also: Faithful Companion; Gilgamesh.

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Enlil

(Sumerian)

Enlil was one of the chief gods of the Sumerian and Babylonian pantheons. According to some myths, he was the offspring of An, the primary Sumerian god. Enlil was also identified as the brother of the mother goddess Aruru and the god of wind, or the sky between Earth and heaven.

Enlil's spouse was Ninlil, who was called Sud in Sumerian myth. His offspring include the goddess Inanna, the queen of heaven; the god Ishkur, a storm god known in Babylonian sources as Adad; Suen, a moon god called Sin in Akkadian; Nergal, an underworld deity; Ninurta, principally a god of war, also known as Ningirsu; Nuska, Enlil's minister who was also a god of fire; Utu, the sun god, known as Shamash in Akkadian; Zababa, a war god; and Ennugi, the canal inspector.

The cult of Enlil was centered in the E-kur, the mountain house, in the Sumerian religious capital of Nippur on the northern border of Sumer. Major stories about Enlil are found in two Sumerian myths: *Enlil and Ninlil* and *Enlil and Sud*. Copies of these myths were found in excavations at Nippur.

Enlil and Ninlil

The myth *Enlil and Ninlil* begins as Enlil spots the beautiful goddess Ninlil bathing in the pure canal. He approached her and offered kisses and love, but the goddess demurred, explaining that she was young and innocent. If her parents found that she had an affair, they would punish her. Nevertheless, Enlil persevered and finally impregnated Ninlil.

Word of Enlil's rape of the goddess was reported to the assembly of the gods, and he was declared to be unclean. He was seized and banished from the city. Despite the impropriety of Enlil's advances, Ninlil stayed by his side, determined to be with him and to bear him more children. Enlil tried to get away, but Ninlil followed him and Enlil slept with her several more times. The myth ends with praise to the mother, Ninlil, who conceived Enlil's children, and with a celebration of Enlil as bringer of fertility and prosperity.

The story implies that even though Enlil raped and deceived Ninlil, she continued to follow him to fulfill her craving to be a wife and to produce children. The story also implies that, even though he wronged Ninlil and became an outcast, Enlil was never permanently barred from returning to civilization.

According to one interpretation, Enlil was god of Earth and of the moist winds of spring. The myth was used to explain Enlil's disappearance at the end of the long, dry summer and his return in the spring as the god who brought fertility and productivity to nature.

Enlil and Sud

A similar myth, *Enlil and Sud,* also relates the story of the young god Enlil's search for a wife. The poem describes Enlil's infatuation with the beautiful young Sud (another name for Ninlil), their courtship, and their subsequent marriage.

The story begins with Enlil, the great god of heaven, in search of a wife. He spotted Sud, a young girl who was the daughter of the goddess Nisaba, in the street in front of her house. Enlil assumed that the girl must be disreputable or she would not have been alone in the street. Taken with her beauty, Enlil promised to rehabilitate her, give her proper clothing, and make her a lady. Sud was taken aback by Enlil's disrespectful speech and tried to brush him off. Enlil persisted, saying he wished to express his love for her. Sud was shocked by this brash behavior and went into the house.

Enlil did not give up. He instructed his emissary, Nuska, to go to the girl's house laden with bridal gifts to ask her mother for her daughter's hand. Nuska arrived and, in the name of Enlil, asked the goddess for the hand of her daughter. The great goddess was flattered that Enlil wished to marry Sud. She responded that Enlil's behavior would be forgiven and she would gladly become his mother-in-law.

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After the wedding, the finest perfumes were poured over Sud, and she and Enlil consummated the marriage. Enlil then blessed his wife. He decreed that she would be known as Nintu, Lady Who Gives Birth. Nintu was then placed in charge of all the secrets pertaining to women. Nintu became a great fertility goddess and was given a second name, Ninlil, which means "goddess of full-grown wheat." She was also given the role of mistress of the scribal arts.

Not only does this myth show Enlil as a love-struck young man rather than a remote deity, but it also contains the Mesopotamian view that a woman's role was to be fertile and to manage her husband's household.

Ira Spar

See also: Adon/Adonis; Dumuzi.

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Enmerkar

(Sumerian)

Enmerkar was the second king of the First Dynasty of Uruk, according to the Sumerian kings list, the ancient text that lists the kings of Sumer. He was said to have reigned for 420 years after the flood, in the early part of the third millennium B.C.E.

The two stories that follow were part of a series of four about the "matter of Aratta." They were probably composed in the city of Ur during the last century of the third millennium B.C.E.

Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta

Several stories deal with the conflict between Enmerkar and the lord of the legendary eastern mountain territory known as the land of Aratta. In the epic tale *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta,* Enmerkar is described as the king of Uruk and the son of the sun god, Utu. Enmerkar was united in a sacred marriage with Inanna, the goddess of Uruk. Inanna chose Enmerkar to be closest to her heart, yet the lord of Aratta also claimed to be her spouse.

The tale is set in ancient days, before the E-ana temple of Inanna was founded or commerce between Sumer and the peoples of the mountains had commenced.

Enmerkar ordered a messenger to go to Aratta and tell the inhabitants and their lord to submit to the yoke of Uruk. The messenger traveled over seven mountains, reached the lord of Aratta, and delivered the message. After the messenger had spoken, the lord of Aratta insisted that it was he who had been chosen by Inanna. The lord refused to acquiesce to Enmerkar's outrageous demands and challenged Enmerkar to a contest of wits. The victor would be the ruler of Utuk and Aratta.

Aratta's Challenge

The lord of Aratta sent Enmerkar's messenger back with instructions to tell Enmerkar that he would have to relieve the famine that had gripped Aratta by providing grain. The barley, according to the challenge, was not to be poured into sacks in the normal manner and then delivered in carts. Instead, it was to be poured into nets and loaded onto pack asses. Upon reaching the lord's courtyard, the grain was to be heaped up in a great pile.

Enmerkar accepted the challenge. He ordered the nets to be filled with green malt. The malt germinated and filled in the mesh of the nets. Grain from the storehouse was loaded into the nets with an extra measure added to account for loss by locusts. The grain was dispatched with a message for the lord of Aratta that he must submit and accept Enmerkar's scepter. He was then to snap off a splinter from the scepter and hold it in his hand as symbol of his vassalage.

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But the lord of Aratta held firm. He would surrender only if Enmerkar's scepter was made from something other than wood, gold, copper, silver, or precious stone. "Then let Enmerkar bring it to me," said the lord of Aratta.

Enmerkar's Victory

With advice from the wise god Enki, Enmerkar solved this riddle as well. He grew a special reed, nurtured it for ten years, then split it with an axe and sent it to Aratta.

The lord of Aratta was taken aback by Enmerkar's cleverness, but he proposed one last challenge—a duel between two champions, one from Aratta and one from Uruk. His only condition was that the man from Uruk should be one who wore a garment of no known color. Enmerkar provided his fighter with an undyed garment that had no color.

Enmerkar prepared to send a messenger demanding once and for all that the lord of Aratta submit. But his message was too long, and the messenger tired as he attempted to learn it. So Enmerkar inscribed the message on a tablet and sent it to Aratta.

The message was written in cuneiform signs that the lord of Aratta was unable to read. The lord became angry but realized he had been defeated by a superior intellect.

Suddenly, Inanna's brother, the storm god Ishkur, brought rain to Aratta. The famine was over. Barley began to sprout on the mountainsides, and chickpeas and wheat began to grow. The lord of Aratta's self-assurance returned. He was overjoyed that the goddess had not abandoned him and his people but remained by their side.

At this point in the story, the lord of Aratta allowed that Enmerkar had triumphed. Unfortunately, the ending is fragmentary and the purpose for which the story was created remains debatable.

Enmerkar and Ensuhgirana

The composition *Enmerkar and Ensuhgirana* relates another episode in the continuing conflict and contest of wills between Enmerkar, the lord of Uruk, and his rival, the lord of Aratta. In this tale, the lord of Aratta is named Ensuhgirana.

The lord of Aratta sent a message to Enmerkar, demanding that he submit and bear the yoke of vassalage. Ensuhgirana further taunted Enmerkar, claiming that only he was the true bridegroom of the goddess Inanna.

Enmerkar rejected Ensuhgirana 's claims and maintained that he was the true lover of the goddess Inanna as well as the true king, ruling with the authority granted to him by the gods.

When Enmerkar's response reached the ears of his rival, Ensuhgirana was perplexed, unable to make an immediate reply. He called together a council of his priests and attendants to advise him. They urged him to back off from his aggressive position, calm down, and seek compromise. But Ensuhgirana rejected this advice and defiantly stated that he would continue to oppose Enmerkar even if his city was destroyed. He would never submit to the lord of Uruk.

The Sorcerer and the Wise Woman

A sorcerer volunteered to help Ensuhgirana, claiming that he had the power to make Uruk submit to Aratta. Happy to hear the sorcerer's boast, Ensuhgirana rewarded him with silver and promised further payment when the men of Uruk were taken captive.

The sorcerer arrived in Uruk and dried up the milk of the cows and goats. The milk, butter, and cheese of the livestock provided for the cult of the goddess Nisaba. Despondent, Nisaba's shepherds and cowherds called for help.

A wise old woman named Sagburu from the city of Eresh challenged the sorcerer to a battle to decide whose magic was stronger. Both threw fish spawn into the river. The sorcerer turned the fish spawn into a large carp, a ewe, a lamb, a cow, an ibex, a wild sheep, and a gazelle kid. The wise woman turned the fish into predators able to capture and kill the sorcerer's creations.

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Defeated, the sorcerer begged the old woman for mercy, but she refused; his offense was too great. The sorcerer was thrown from the bank of the Euphrates River to his death. The news of the defeat and death of the sorcerer broke Ensuhgirana's spirit. He admitted defeat and acknowledged the superiority of the king of Uruk.

The stories of Enmerkar incorporate several ancient story elements and therefore are of great interest to folklorists and storytellers. In the first tale, for example, the messenger traveled the magical seven mountains, as occurs in many folktales of heroic journeys. The riddle contest and magicians' duel are tale types that are featured in world folklore.

Ira Spar

See also: Culture Heroes.

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Ennead of Heliopolis

(Egyptian)

In ancient Egyptian religion, an ennead was a group of nine gods. The principal ennead was the Great Ennead of Heliopolis. This group included the gods Atum, Shu, Tefnut, Geb, Nut, Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephthys. These nine can be considered the embodiments of the basic elements of life as set forth in Egyptian creation myth: life, sky, earth, and so on.

The number nine, or three times three, also might indicate a "plural of plurals," or, simply, many gods. But generally an ennead was a group of exactly nine.

In the Heliopolitan version of creation, Atum, who created himself and then the world, begot Shu and Shu's sister Tefnut. These two represented the air and moisture, respectively. Shu and Tefnut gave rise to Geb (earth) and his sister Nut (sky). Geb and Nut, in turn, gave birth to the four other pairs of male and female gods who embodied the balanced forces of order and disorder and played direct roles in the created universe.

Noreen Doyle

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Epics

An epic is a long narrative verse that is generally majestic in theme and style. These poems deal with legendary or historical events of national or universal significance, usually focusing on the exploits of a single individual.

Most, though not all, epics share certain elements: supernatural forces that shape the action, physical combat, conventions such as the ship lists of the *Iliad* or other listings of participants, and speeches couched in elevated language. There are two main types of epics, folk and literary.

Folk Epics

Folk, or popular, epics depict events from mythology and folklore. These works may have been consolidated or synthesized by a known poet, such as the Greek Homer, or by some unknown hand. Well-known examples of folk

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epics are the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf,* written sometime between the eighth and tenth centuries; the German *Nibelungenlied,* or *Song of the Nibelungs,* penned during the thirteenth century; and the Indian epics, the *Mahabharata* of the Bharata dynasty (400 B.C.E.–400 C.E.) and the *Ramayana,* which dates to the third century B.C.E.

The story material depicted in folk epics is usually based on legends or events that occurred long before the epic was composed. The characters and episodes in many folk epics were first the subjects of folk-song cycles. The French folk epics known as chansons de geste, or songs of heroic deeds, were composed from the end of the tenth century to the middle or end of the eleventh century. The *Chanson de Roland* (*The Song of Roland,* c. 1100 C.E.) is one of the finest examples of this type of epic.

Other great folk epics include the eleventh-century Spanish *El Poema de Mio Cid* (*The Song of the Cid*) and Russia's *Slovo o Polku Igoreve* (*Song of Igor's Campaign,* c. 1187). From Mali came *Sundiata,* which honors the exploits of a hero-king of the twelfth century. *Sundiata* was passed down through oral tradition for centuries by the griots, who were the bards of West Africa.

Literary Epics

Literary epics generally convey contemporary attitudes and were often written for a patron. They include *The Divine Comedy* (1307–1321) by the Italian poet Dante Alighieri, which expresses the faith of medieval Christianity. *The Faerie Queene* (1596) by the English poet Edmund Spenser was written to honor his patron, Elizabeth I, queen of England. The English poet John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) represents the ideals of Christian humanism.

See also: *Aeneid;* Antar; *Argonautica; Beowulf;* Charlemagne and His Peers; *Digenis Acritas;* El Cid; *Gesta Danorum;* Gilgamesh; *Gudrun/Kudrun*; Hervarar Saga; *Iliad; Iliou Persis; Journey to the West/Monkey; Kalevala;* Kievan Cycle; *Lusiads, The; Mahabharata; Odyssey; Popol Vuh; Rolandslied; Saga of the Volsungs; Song of Igor's Campaign; Song of Roland; Sundiata; Telegonia; Retellings: The Ramayana; Shah-nameh.*

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Epics, French

The epic poems of France are called chansons de geste, or songs of deeds. This medieval term refers to the songs of the trouvères in the north and the troubadours in the south. Manuscripts of these works that date from the twelfth to the fifteenth century survive, but the events they describe took place in the eighth and ninth centuries, during Charlemagne's reign.

In their earliest form, the chansons de geste were invariably in verse, but over the years, the most popular were turned into lengthy prose romances. Many of the hundred or more chansons de geste that are still preserved were composed in the northern dialect, or *langue d'oil.* Although similar epics existed in the *langue d'oc,* the dialect spoken in and around Provence, only fragments survive.

Three Cycles

There are three great cycles, or groups, of French epics: the cycle of France, the court epics, and the Matière de Rome la Grand (Matters of Great Rome).

The cycle of France deals with Charlemagne and his knights. The finest epic of this cycle is the famous *Chanson de Roland* (*Song of Roland*). Others include *Guillaume d'Orange, Les Quatre Fils d'Aymon* (*The Four Sons of Aymon*), and *Ogier le Danois* (*Ogier the Dane*). The depiction of Charlemagne in these works varied from age

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Two of the kings immortalized in French epic poems are King Arthur (left) and Charlemagne. Both are depicted in this fifteenth-century painting by Italian Jaquerio Giacomo (fl.1403–1453). *(Scala/Art Resource, NY)*

to age. Charlemagne in the *Chanson de Roland* was a heroic figure, but by the late Middle Ages, he had become an object of contempt and ridicule, as in *Les Quatre Fils d'Aymon*.

The second group of French epics is the court epics. The most famous exponent of these was the poet Chrétien de Troyes, who used King Arthur as the focus of his tales. The principal poems of this cycle are *Launcelot du Lac, Ivain le Chevalier au Lion* (*Ivan the Knight of the Lion*), *Erec et Enide, Merlin, Tristan,* and *Perceval*. These poems tell of chivalry and love in a world of magic and have been translated many times into English. Also included in this epic cycle are *Gérard de Roussillon, Hugues Capet, Macaire,* and *Huon de Bordeaux*.

A subcategory of this group is often referred to as the crusade epics, in which the stock topics are quarrels, challenges, fights, banquets, and tournaments. Among these are *Les Enfances de Godefroi* (*The Children of Godfrey*), *Antioche,* and William of Tudela's *Chanson de la Croisade Albigeoise* (*Song of the Albigensian Crusade*).

Other short works that were written in the same period include those known as *lais*. The tale called *Aucassin et Nicolette* is an anonymous work that is one of the most familiar of these. The author Marie de France wrote many lais in the twelfth century.

The third great epic cycle, the Matière de Rome la Grand (Matters of Great Rome), is also known as the antique cycle. These epics are Christianized versions of the stories found in works such as the *Iliad, Odyssey, Aeneid, Thebais, Alexandreid,* and so on. In their prose forms, the *Roman de Thèbes* (*Book of Thebes*), *Roman de Troie* (*Book of Troy*), and *Roman d'Alexandre* (*Book of Alexander*) contain, besides innumerable medieval embellishments, the first mention in French of the quest for the fountain of youth.

Animals, Allegory, and History

By the late Middle Ages, other types of epics appeared. The animal, or beast, epics were particularly popular in France. These stories used animal characters to satirize human society. The stories of Reynard the Fox, in *Roman du Renard* (*The Book of Renard*), were known in Holland and Germany but were most popular with the French. Allegorical epics also developed at this time. In *Le Roman de la Rose* (*The Book of the Rose*), abstract ideas were personified in characters such as Hope, Slander (Malebouche), and Danger.

During the Renaissance, semihistorical epic poems, such as those written by the poet Pierre de Ronsard, became popular. His epic *Franciade* claimed that the Franks were lineal descendants from Francus, a son of Priam, thus connecting French history with the Trojan War.

French poets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries wrote epics that became fairly popular in their time. Jean Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin attempted to describe the divine origin of the French monarchy in *Clovis ou la France Chrétienne*. Joan of Arc was a popular subject, and poems were written about her, such as Jean Chapelain's *La Pucelle*.

Voltaire's *La Henriade* is a half-bombastic, half-satirical account of the wars of Henry IV,

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in which the English king attempted to gain the crown of France. The most popular of all the French prose epics was François Fénelon's *Télémaque,* an account of Telemachus's journeys to find some trace of his long-absent father, Ulysses.

The creation of French epics ended in the nineteenth century, with *Les Martyrs* by François René de Chateaubriand and Victor Hugo's *La Légende des Siècles* (*The Legend of the Centuries*).

See also: Epics.

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Epics, German

German epics include several cycles, each of which clusters around a particular hero. Some of the more familiar heroes of these works are Ermenrich the Goth, Dietrich von Bern, Theodoric the East Goth, Attila the Hun, and Siegfried.

Hildebrandslied

The earliest epic cycle, dating from about 800 C.E., is the *Hildebrandslied* (*Lay of Hildebrand*), a collection of epic songs that relate the adventures of the warrior-king Hildebrand. After spending thirty years in Hungary, Hildebrand left his wife and infant son, Hadubrand, and returned to northern Italy. Several years later, a false rumor of Hildebrand's death reached Hungary. By that time, Hadubrand had grown into a young man and had achieved great renown as a warrior.

Hadubrand met his father, deemed him an impostor, and fought with him. Unfortunately, the rest of the *Hildebrandslied* epic is lost, so it is not known whether it has the traditional tragic ending of the father slaying the son. In the ninth century, the Emperor Charlemagne had a collection of these ancient epic songs compiled, but his son and successor, Louis I, deemed them unsuitable for Christians and had the collection destroyed.

Christian and Historic Epics

By the time of Louis I (814–840 C.E.), a series of Christian epics had been written in German, including reworkings of biblical tales such as the Exodus. There were also some historical epics. These included the *Ludwigslied,* a fictionalized history of the invasion of the Normans, and the story of Walter von Aquitanien, an epic of the Burgundian-Hunnish cycle written by Ekkehard of Saint Gall before 973.

By the twelfth century, the crusades had revived the epic memories of Charlemagne and Roland and of the triumphs of Alexander. This renewed interest inspired a *Rolandslied* (*Song of Roland*), revised and translated into German, and an *Alexanderlied.* The legend of *Herzog Ernst,* which was also inspired by the crusades, remained popular in Germany through the nineteenth century. This work relates the adventures of Ernst, a duke of Bavaria, and his pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

The Lombard Cycle

The Lombard cycle, which is named for the Lombard dynasty, contains the tales of King Rother, King Otnit, and Wolfdietrich. The tale of King Rother, who is traditionally considered to be Charlemagne's grandfather, is a court epic of this cycle. This epic tells of King Rother's quest to have the emperor of Constantinople's daughter for his bride. Rother abducted and married her, but the emperor

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brought her back home. Rother pursued and recaptured her.

Another epic in the Lombard cycle is *Otnit,* which tells of the marriage of King Otnit to a heathen princess (with the help of a noble dwarf). The bride's father gave the couple a gift of dragon's eggs. The monsters hatched, ultimately caused the death of Otnit, and infested Teutonic lands with their progeny. The legends of Hug-Dietrich and Wolf-Dietrich are also part of the Lombard cycle and continue the adventures of Otnit up to his death.

Nibelungenlied

The German epic considered to be the greatest of all is the twelfth-century *Nibelungenlied.* This poem conveys the tragic tale of Siegfried the Dragonslayer and his wife, Kriemhild. Siegfried is portrayed as a doomed hero who was murdered by his wife's family.

The work has been referred to as the *Iliad* of Germany. In the related epic called *Gudrun,* Siegfried's widow takes revenge on his murderers. The latter work is considered the German answer to Homer's *Odyssey.*

Courtly Epics

The so-called courtly epics flourished in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. These poetic tales of King Arthur and his court include Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* and the works of Gottfried of Strassburg, such as the unfinished *Tristan.* Hartmann von Aue wrote four extended narrative poems, including *Erec* and *Iwein.*

At this time, epics were also sung. Minnesingers were German minstrels who were active from the twelfth through fourteenth centuries. Their songs, called Minnesang, told of courtly life, especially the legends of King Arthur, the Holy Grail, and Charlemagne.

Many of these epics were compiled in the fifteenth century by Kaspar von der Rhön in the *Heldenbuch,* or *Book of Heroes*. Another collection, known as the *Volksbücher* (*Book of the Folk*), presents such famous tales as that of Doctor Faustus.

Perhaps the most important work to draw inspiration from the old German epic material was nineteenth-century composer Richard Wagner's great cycle of mythic operas known as the Ring Cycle.

See also: Epics.

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Epics, Greek

Ancient Greek epics generally center on the real or mythological Trojan War or on mythological themes such as epic voyages and the adventures of mythic heroes.

Perhaps the most familiar Greek epics are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey.* These works are attributed to Homer, who is said to have lived sometime between 1050 and 850 B.C.E. The question of whether Homer actually created the epics or merely recited extant verses has been hotly disputed since the second century B.C.E.

The Trojan Cycle

Many Greek epics have, unfortunately, been entirely lost; for others, only fragments remain. A group of these ancient epics form what is termed the Trojan Cycle, because all of them relate in some way to the Trojan War.

Among these short works is the *Cypria,* by Stasimus of Cyprus (or possibly by Arctinus of Miletus). This poem relates the god Jupiter's frustrated wooing of Thetis, her marriage with Peleus, the episode of the golden apple, the judgment of Paris, the kidnapping of Helen, the mustering of the Greek forces, and the main events of the first nine years of the Trojan War, ending with the funeral of Hector.

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Arctinus of Miletus continues the story in his *Aethiopia*. The poet describes the events surrounding the arrival of Penthesilea, queen of the Amazons. She came to aid the Trojans but was killed by Achilles. Achilles was subsequently slain by Apollo and Paris. This epic concludes with the famous dispute between Ajax and Ulysses for the possession of Achilles's armor.

The *Little Iliad,* the authorship of which has been ascribed to several poets, including Homer, describes the madness and death of Ajax, the arrival of Philoctetes with the arrows of Hercules, the death of Paris, the purloining of the Palladium, the stratagem of the wooden horse, and the death of Priam.

In the *Ilion Persis,* or *Sack of Troy,* by Arctinus of Miletus, the poet describes the Trojans' hesitation over whether or not to convey the wooden steed into their city, and includes the tales of Sinon and Laocoon. The work ends with the taking and sacking of the city, the massacre of the Trojan men, and the Trojan women being carried off into captivity.

In the *Nostroi* (*Homeward Voyage*), by Agias of Troezene, the sons of Atreus, Agamemnon and Menelaus, argue. While Agamemnon delays his departure to offer propitiatory sacrifices, Menelaus sets sail for Egypt, where he is detained. The poem also tells of Agamemnon's return, his assassination, and the revenge taken by his son Orestes.

The *Telegonia* of Eugammon of Cyrene describes events that occur after Homer's *Odyssey* ends. According to the *Telegonia,* Ulysses renewed his adventures and visited Thesprotia. The story ignores Ulysses's marriage to Penelope and has him marry another woman whose name has not been preserved. Ulysses eventually leaves his wife and son. Upon his death, his two sons battle. Another sequel, or addition, to the *Odyssey,* is the *Telemachia,* but only the name of this work remains.

Other Themes

Another series of Greek poems is the Theban cycle. These poems comprise the anonymous work called *Thebais*. The cycle relates the stories of Oedipus; the Seven Against Thebes, who were killed fighting against Thebes after the death of Oedipus; and the tales of the Epigoni, the sons of the dead Seven.

Epic poems were also written about the labors of Heracles and the life of Alexander. The epic *Alexandra* by Lycophron (270 B.C.E.) is a sequel to the *Iliad,* in which Alexander is represented as a descendant of Achilles. In 110 C.E., Callisthenes attempted to prove that Alexander descended directly from the Egyptian god Jupiter Ammon or from his priest Nectanebus.

Hesiod's epic *Theogony* is a summary of Greek mythology that gives the story of the Greek creation myth and the origins and activities of the Greek gods.

In 194 B.C.E., Apollonius Rhodius, or Apollonius of Rhodes, wrote the *Argonautica,* which relates the adventures of the hero Jason and his quest for the Golden Fleece. A lighter work, a burlesque epic in Greek called the *Bactrachomyomachia* (*Battle of Frogs and Mice*), is often attributed to Homer. Only some 300 lines of this work remain.

See also: Epics.

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Epics, Roman

The epic works of Roman literature were inspired to a large degree by Greek compositions. Numerous Latin translations of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were written. The first and most famous of these was by Livius Andronicus, who lived in the third century B.C.E. Andronicus also created what was probably the

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first wholly Roman epic, a narration of Roman history that has been lost.

The Roman poet Naevius lived and worked a century later. He composed the *Cyprian Iliad* as well as a heroic poem on the first Punic War. In the second century B.C.E., Ennius wrote an epic of Rome's founding, and the poet Hostius penned another epic. Only fragments of each of these works survive.

Caesar Augustus fostered the arts during his reign, and many epic works resulted. Publius Terentius provided a Latin translation of the Greek *Argonautica,* the adventures of Jason and the Argonauts. The greatest of the poets of that Augustan age (43 B.C.E.–18 C.E.) was Virgil, whose most important work was *The Aeneid*. This epic described the wanderings and descent into the underworld of the legendary Trojan warrior Aeneas. Virgil became a revered figure, and by the Middle Ages he was a folk hero with a cycle of tales about his powers, not as a poet but as a magician.

The poet Lucan, a contemporary of Virgil, created the historical epic *Pharsalia,* which chronicled the rivalry between Caesar and Pompey. Around the same time, Statius created two epics based on the Trojan War, *Thebais* and the unfinished *Achilleis*.

Quintius Curtius, who wrote in the second century C.E., composed an epic on Alexander. In the third century C.E., Juvencus penned the first Christian epic, using the life of Christ as his theme.

Claudianus wrote mythological epics on Greek themes in the fifth century, which included the story of Persephone's abduction. This work can be said to mark the end of Roman epic literature.

See also: Epics.

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Epics, Spanish

The true Spanish epics were created during the eleventh and twelfth centuries as the people fought to regain control of their country after years of Arab rule.

Unfortunately, few complete epics remain from those early days, save for the eleventh-century *El Poema de Mio Cid* (*The Song of the Cid*). Considered one of the great literary classics of Spain, this story has been retold in opera and film. Additions to the original epic were made in such works as the *Cronica Rimada* of the thirteenth century, which gives an account of the Cid's youth and includes the episode in which he slays the father of his fiancée, Ximena.

Fragments of two other epics concern the princesses of Lara and Prince Fernan Gonzales. These works, and others that have been almost completely lost, were popularized in Spain by the *juglares*—the Spanish minstrels—who invented heroes such as Bernardo del Carpio. Unfortunately, all the poems about this fictional hero have perished, and his fame is preserved only in the prose chronicles.

Chivalric romances about fictional heroes living in a world of magic became popular in the Middle Ages. *Amadis de Gaule* was extremely popular in its own time and led to a host of sequels and imitations. It was this type of work that the novelist Miguel de Cervantes later mocked in *Don Quixote*.

Like other Western Europeans, the Spaniards also created works based on the life of Alexander and on the various Arthurian characters and the quest for the Holy Grail. By the eighteenth century, more than 200 religious and political epics had been written.

See also: Epics.

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Erra

(Babylonian)

The underworld god Erra was a violent deity associated with warfare, anarchy, and plague in Babylonian literature. His activities are known mainly from a myth called *Erra and Ishum,* preserved in copies produced in the first millennium B.C.E. The myth, written on four tablets, is concerned with the sources of violence.

Erra and Ishum

The myth begins with the introduction of Ishum, a minor deity of the Mesopotamian pantheon who dwelled in the underworld, and Erra, a warrior of the gods. Both were restless and itching to do battle.

The demons referred to as the Seven were presented to Erra by the god Anu and were to be used to crush the noise of humans when they threatened the balance between mortals and their gods. According to some interpretations, the noise refers to humankind's bent for violence and strife, behavior that threatens the world order.

The Seven complained that they were restless. In response, Erra suggested to Ishum that they begin a campaign to destroy the people. Ishum objected, but Erra insisted that the black-headed people, meaning the Mesopotamians, would not listen to the god Marduk's commands and deserved to be punished.

Erra and Marduk

Erra went to Marduk, the king of the gods, ostensibly seeking advice. Erra's real intention was to depose Marduk and rule in his place. Marduk was away from his palace because his statue had been damaged and was in need of repair. With the absence of the god from his abode, the lesser gods became terrified.

While repairs to the statue were being made, Erra stationed himself as guardian of the temple and schemed to usurp Marduk's powers. When Marduk returned, Erra's help as a guardian was no longer required.

Erra unleashed a barrage of rage and hatred, praising his own ability to create terror. He released the Seven to begin his violent campaign.

Erra's Contempt for Humanity

Ishum tried to calm Erra, asking why he was so determined to attack both gods and humans. Erra, replied, full of contempt, that humans were stupid and that when Marduk had left his dwelling, kings and princes were negligent in their duties to the gods. The bond between the people and the deities was thus broken.

Ishum then described in detail the havoc, plunder, atrocities, and destruction that were occurring on Earth. All of humankind was suffering: the strong and the weak, the young and the old, the priests, the rulers, and the righteous as well as the unrighteous.

Satisfied that his power was recognized, Erra decreed that the enemies of Babylon should fight one another. Afterward, only Babylon would remain to rule. Erra instructed Ishum to do as he wished with the Seven. Ishum set out for the mountain lands of the Sutaeans, the archenemies of Babylon. With the Seven before him, Ishum devastated Babylon's enemies. He destroyed their cities, obliterated their wildlife, and returned the people to clay.

At last, Erra was calmed. He addressed the gods, saying that he had erred in his anger and had slain without distinction between good and evil. He apologized for his frenzy and loss of reason and praised Ishum for his restraint. Erra then instructed Ishum to begin the work of restoring the fertility of the land and sea and, using the booty from the Sutaeans, to rebuild its temples.

The poem ends with praise to the warrior Ishum.

Ira Spar

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See also: Death; Hel; Nergal.

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Estonian Storytelling

Estonia, a European nation that lies near the Baltic Sea, has been home to farmers, fishermen, and hunters for thousands of years. Until the twentieth century, families lived together in wooden huts, and the whole village worked and had fun together. Living and working under one roof meant that children soon had a clear picture of adult life and of their own future. The people's heritage was passed from generation to generation and thus remained intact for centuries.

To tell any story, three elements are required—a subject, a storyteller, and an audience. The repertoire of Estonian folk storytellers has consisted of fairy tales, folktales, humorous tales, and true stories. The villagers who shared certain stories and songs became the spiritual elite of the village. They had to be eloquent, quick to react, familiar with the local repertoire, and able to find new stories to tell. Stories were passed on as people worked together paving roads, logging, building houses, making hay, threshing, and taking part in any number of joint activities common to village life.

The Stories

After World War I, Estonian society changed from a patriarchal culture of manor owners and villagers to one in which people owned their own homes. Due to developing industry, many people moved to the cities, where they formed groups according to their occupations, economic connections, and hobbies. People read newspapers and magazines, sang in choirs, and joined various societies. All of this change resulted in the loss of the storytelling tradition and the disappearance of certain types of stories.

The traditional fairy tales, stories of wonder and witches, were the first to disappear, and folktales of local events survived only slightly longer. The folktales were shorter and therefore easier to present, and carried fewer limitations than the fairy tales. For example, in telling folktales, the storyteller could say that his or her story actually happened to someone he or she knew firsthand. But eventually belief in the truthfulness of folktales also disappeared.

The repertoire of jokes and anecdotes was also altered after the war. Prior to the war, humorous stories were generally about farmers and lords of the manor or village pastors, masters and help, shepherd boys, and traveling craftsmen, especially tailors. Stories related incidents between members of extended families, such as mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, about rich and poor people in the village, and about spinsters and bachelors who wanted to get married at any cost. Today, the anecdote repertoire contains jokes from the news, some of which have been translated from other languages, including political jokes.

In the twentieth century, when the older wonder tales disappeared, new, more realistic types emerged that were linked with specific events, people, or places. Stories are told about modern professions, different age groups, social and religious groups, historic events, and friends and family. Modern Estonians generally live in small family groups, far from their extended family's place of origin, so stories about a family's past have a special meaning that determine personal identity.

The Storytellers

Good storytelling skills have long been a valuable asset. This was particularly true before World War I. The ability to spin a tale has helped many tellers to make contact with other people, gain trust in new situations, and even earn a living.

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There are stories of beggars who were valued visitors due to their eloquence. Leena Udam was a storyteller in the early twentieth century who went begging with her father when she was young. Her father would tell fairy tales for his hosts in the evening in exchange for a place to stay.

Estonian men traditionally were the storytellers in a village. They brought stories home from their travels to markets in places such as Riga, Pskov, and Saint Petersburg. They spent the nights in taverns along the way, telling stories and making music. When they returned home, people came to hear the stories they had collected or invented during their travels. Some villages had so-called story houses, where people gathered to tell and to hear stories.

A storyteller named Miku Juhan lived in Tartu County in south Estonia in the nineteenth century. It is said that when he got carried away by the urge to tell stories, he could forget even the most urgent jobs. Occasionally, when Miku's wife brought lunch to workers in the field, she would find Miku telling his tales for the workers from the village, keeping them from their tasks. And when a beggar happened to come from a place far away, there would be a storytelling feast at Miku's farm, where people told stories well into the night.

In Kuusalu, northern Estonia, people tell of spike traders, people who traded honeysuckle spikes that were used to make rakes and other tools, receiving fish in return. Some of these tradesmen were great storytellers. One of them talked with an old man named Eerige for two days, and still there was more to talk about. From this story came an old Estonian saying about people who talk for too long. They are said to be "like the old man Eerige and the spikes trader."

Venues and Audiences

The dark autumn and winter months were considered especially suitable for storytelling. During that time, it was customary to sit in the twilight, allowing for a rest period before lighting pine splinters or oil lamps. This was especially true on Thursdays, which had become the traditional storytelling night. One old adage says, "You should not work in the twilight; in the twilight you must sit and talk; then the crops will be good."

The first through tenth days of November were special nights, called *jäguõhtud,* in the coastal areas of Kuusalu and Jõelähtme. Throughout Estonia, storytelling was also part of the Christmas celebration, which was nearly two weeks long.

In southeast Estonia there was a strictly fixed time for stories—a period before Christmas when the cattle had not yet had their young. Once the first calf was born, storytelling and riddles were strictly forbidden until after the calving season. The reason for this lay in the belief that storytelling at an inappropriate time would attract evil spirits, which are especially dangerous to young animals. This was a remnant of an ancient belief that storytelling had magic functions. Telling stories was hoped to bring success in hunting and fishing, as well as in farming and raising cattle.

Research and Current Trends

Estonian folktales came to the attention of folklorists at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Many audio recordings were made of storytellers between the end of that century and the middle of the twentieth. Most of the early repertoire also has been written down.

Studies of Estonian folklore have been formally conducted since the 1920s. By the beginning of 1987, there were more than 115,000 manuscripts of folk narratives cataloged at the Archive of Estonian Folklore, located at Tartu. A small part of the collection has been published in anthologies, collections, and children's books, and as individual texts.

Traditional storytelling has been altered drastically in the modern age. Current lifestyles the world over do not present many opportunities for this traditional pastime. The numbers of stories and storytellers are dwindling. To keep the tradition alive, organizations such as the Estonian National Culture Center provide

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training courses, counseling, events, and publications to entice Estonians of all ages back to the art of storytelling. There is a movement in Estonia to revive this vital art form, and the graduates and teachers of the culture center's School of Fairy Tales bring the joy of the genre to the people.

Storytelling clubs also have appeared in Estonia. These include the Solstice Club, formed in 2001 by a group of kindergarten teachers. They have designated the first day of spring as the Day of All Storytellers. The founders created the club so that there would be a place for people who are interested in storytelling and stories to tell, hear, and exchange stories so that the stories might live on.

Contemporary storytelling helps to develop eloquence and expression through the regeneration of traditional stories and creation of new ones.

Pille Kippar and Piret Paar

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Etana

(Babylonian)

Etana was a legendary Babylonian king who ruled in the Sumerian city of Kish after the great flood. The myth of Etana, written in Akkadian in the first millennium B.C.E., was known in antiquity as *They Planned Out a City* or *The Series of Etana*. The narrative revolves around the interaction among an eagle, a serpent, and Etana.

The gods had established the city of Kish and appointed Etana as its king. Etana built a shrine for the storm god, Adad, in the shade of a poplar tree. An eagle lived in the tree's crown, and a serpent built its nest in the tree's roots. The two were friends and swore a mutual oath of friendship before the sun god, Shamash, each promising to take care of the other's young.

At first, both the snake and the eagle respected the terms of their pact, each taking turns hunting wild animals to feed their young. One day, after his young had grown, the eagle plotted evil, determining to eat the serpent's children. The eagle's littlest fledgling, one who was wise, tried to dissuade his father, but to no avail. The eagle devoured the serpent's young and destroyed the nest with his talons.

Upon his return from a hunting trip, the serpent found that his offspring were gone. He turned to the god Shamash, imploring the god of justice to punish the evil eagle and avenge his loss. The divine judge advised the serpent to hide in the carcass of a wild ox and lie in wait for the ravenous bird. When the eagle came to eat, the snake should attack his foe and punish him for his offense.

Unaware of the trap and ignoring the warning given to him by his wise little fledgling, the eagle circled above and then swooped down on his prey. At that moment, the serpent emerged from his hiding place, seized the eagle, clipped his wings, plucked out his pinion and tail feathers, and imprisoned him in a bottomless pit.

Left to die of hunger and thirst, the eagle entreated Shamash for help, but to no avail. The god denounced the eagle's wickedness and abominable deed. Months went by. Finally Shamash heeded the eagle's call and developed a plan to send a human agent to help.

In the city of Kish, Etana had been praying to Shamash to grant him an heir. In a dream, Etana heard the voice of the god of justice telling him to go to the aid of the eagle, who in return for his assistance would help him find a mythical plant of fertility. Etana crossed the mountains and found the pit with the crippled eagle inside.

Etana stood at the edge of the pit and told the eagle that he would save his life in return for information on the plant of birth. The bird

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agreed. Etana filled in the pit so that the eagle could climb out, and the eagle flapped his wings, ready to fly. The two set out in quest of the plant of birth. Etana mounted the bird, his hands on the wing feathers. They flew aloft and ascended to the heavens. Etana began to panic. He could no longer see the land or find the great sea. Etana begged the eagle to descend.

The preserved part of the story ends with Etana's return from his flight. The tablet that bears the myth is broken in key spots. It is not known whether Etana's quest for the plant of birth was successful, although another text refers to his offspring who succeeded him on the throne as king of Kish.

Ira Spar

See also: Culture Heroes.

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Ethiopian Mythology

The hardships of life in Ethiopia and Eritrea, which split off from Ethiopia as a separate nation in 1993, are known around the world. This bleak land and its people carry a long history and rich mythology.

Menelik I

The ancient Aksumite kingdom flourished in northern Ethiopia from approximately 100 to 600 C.E. The city of Aksum is believed to be where Menelik I, the supposed son of the queen of Sheba, or Balkis, and King Solomon brought the Ark of the Covenant from Jerusalem. For the people of Ethiopia, the city, which is now in ruins, is still regarded as the ancient residence and capital city of Balkis.

The Emperor Haile Selassie, who reigned until 1963, was believed to have descended directly from King Solomon and Balkis. The story of Menelik I is likely pure myth. There probably was a queen of Sheba, but she would have ruled over the land of Saba in southern Arabia. She and King Solomon probably never met, let alone had the love affair that produced this son.

Illalei

Ethiopia is primarily an Islamic nation, but traces of the region's mythology still remain. Some people continue to follow the older religions, and their lore is worth pursuing by those interested in stories.

Illalei is the Supreme Being and creator among the Burji-Konso tribes of Ethiopia. He is elsewhere called Wak. He lives in the clouds and keeps the heavens at a distance from the earth. A kindhearted god, it is Illalei who put stars in the heavens to keep the night alive.

When the world was first made, Illalei saw that it was too flat. He told the first man to build a coffin, shut Illalei in it, and bury the coffin. The first man did this. Illalei drew down a rain of fire for seven years, which formed the mountains. Then Illalei sprang back to life.

The first man grew lonely, so Illalei formed a woman out of his own blood. The first man and woman had thirty children but hid half of them from Illalei. The god was so angry at this deception that he changed the fifteen hidden children into the animals and the demons.

Other Mythical Figures

The three chief gods, in their order of rank, are Beher, the god of the sea, Mahrem, the warrior-god, who was supreme god in the Axumite Empire, and Astar, the sky god. The earth spirit is called Medr, and Ekera, in the religion of the Oromo of Ethiopia, is the afterworld.

Current events show continuing problems in Ethiopia and its neighboring countries. Yet in spite of this adversity, the mythology of this land survives.

See also: Ethiopian Storytelling.

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Ethiopian Storytelling

Storytelling has always been a central component of Ethiopian culture. Even today, despite political and economic difficulties, in the midst of war and famine, storytellers continue to entertain, transmit history, and spread traditional wisdom.

Most of the stories are still passed on orally. Tales commonly told in Ethiopia include the expected variants on world tales, such as those in which the "little guy" gets the better of the overlord. In one Ethiopian example, a clever man (or sometimes a boy) and a selfish rich man argued. The selfish rich man claimed that a poor man did not have to share in his meal but could be nourished by the scent alone. The clever man pointed out that a distant fire does not provide the same heat as one up close.

Local or national tales that may be based on historical incidents include one about the discovery of coffee. Tradition states that a goatherd discovered its effects when he saw his goats prance about after eating coffee beans. This tale has spread throughout the United States within the last decade, thanks in part to the proliferation of coffeehouses.

Specific cultures within Ethiopia have their own stories and lore. The Ethiopian Jews, for example, passed Judaic stories along within Ethiopia for generations. Coptic Christians also have their religious tales, which tend to be similar to the great body of world Christian tales and are separate from the folklore of the general population.

In earlier days, each lord or ruler within Ethiopia had his own storyteller, in addition to the public storytellers and singers found in every village. The latter sometimes passed along political commentary by reciting a specific form of verse called a *kinae,* which contained both obvious and hidden meanings.

Today, public entertainers are known as *azmari,* or singers, who accompany their tales and poems with the *masengo,* a one-stringed fiddle, or the *krar,* a type of lyre. These performers still pass along both praise and social commentary in their work, which is performed in bars or on street corners.

See also: Ethiopian Mythology.

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Evil Eye

The evil eye is said to be a dark gift possessed by a man or woman whose deliberate glance brings sickness, bad luck, or death to a targeted individual.

The belief in the evil eye is common around the world. The ancient Romans called it *fascinum,* which may be the root word for the modern English word *fascinate*. In Hebrew, the evil eye is called the *ayin harah,* and in Jewish folklore, continuing into modern times, the Yiddish phrase *keyn aynhoreh,* or no evil eye, is often said to ward off bad luck after good news is announced or praise is given. In French, the evil eye is called the *mauvais veil,* in Germany it is *boser blick,* and in Italy it is *malocchio*.

The Greeks call the evil eye *baskania,* or *matiasma*. There is a tradition that may have originated in ancient Greece of painting a large eye on the prow of a ship that sails in the Mediterranean. This is meant to let the ship see where it is headed and to ward off

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This amulet, intended to provide protection to a woman in childbirth, includes symbols and phrases against the evil eye, demons in general, and Lilith, an Assyrian female demon, in particular. The amulet comes from Jerusalem and dates to the late nineteenth century. *(Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)*

any evil eye by staring the ill will back at the sender.

To fight the evil eye, a number of magical mirrors and amulets can be used. The Italian *corno,* or curved horn, and *figga,* a clenched hand with the thumb stuck through the middle and fourth finger, are two examples. Another warding-off sign is an outstretched hand with forefinger and pinky extended to form horns. (The same "horns" gesture was sometimes made to mock a man whose wife was cheating on him.)

Throughout the Near East, glass balls or disks with a blue circle painted on the outside and a concentric black circle inside it are considered folk talismans. A blue eye also can be found on some forms of the "Hand of Fatima" or *hamsa,* which is an Islamic folk amulet against the evil eye.

See also: Black Magic.

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Fables

Fables are brief fictitious stories that teach a moral.

In most fables, the characters are not humans. They are animals, plants, or some normally inanimate object that talks and acts like a person. Fables are written both in prose and in verse.

Most of the Greek fables that remain popular in the West today are credited to a Greek slave named Aesop, who lived about 600 B.C.E. Some of these stories actually came from ancient India and were included with the Greek fables by early Western publishers. The Indian fables also are compiled in a work from the second century B.C.E., called the *Panchatantra*.

In the seventeenth century, French writer Jean de La Fontaine retold Aesop's fables for adults. He made his versions vessels for biting political and social commentary.

Many writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries created new fables or retold the classic tales. Ivan Krylov, a Russian poet of the early nineteenth century, translated La Fontaine's fables into Russian and added many of his own. Krylov's fables had been intended for adults, but they became very popular children's stories.

In the twentieth century, American humorist James Thurber revived the fable as a form of social criticism. His fables are noted for their stinging portrayal of the anxieties of modern life.

See also: Aesop and *Aesop's Fables;* Berekhiah ben Natronai ha-Nakdan; La Fontaine, Jean de.

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Fabliau/Fabliaux

Fabliaux are brief comic tales in verse that were popular in France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These parodies about ordinary people, usually of the lower or middle class, were set in everyday places.

The plots of these short tales were often satirical or bawdy. They frequently centered on the cleverness (and sexual enthusiasm) of the hero or heroine and the gullibility of the victim. A *fabliau* might have a social edge, pointing at members of the clergy or institutions such as marriage.

Marie de France's "A Woman and Her Paramour" of the early twelfth century and

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Boccaccio's mid-fourteenth-century *Decameron* are prime examples of fabliaux. Several of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales,* such as "The Reeve's Tale," drew from this genre.

The high age of the fabliau ended in the fourteenth century. Its popularity was already waning by the time Chaucer used the form at the end of that century. These bawdy tales are rarely used today.

See also: Fables.

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Fairy Godmothers

The fairy godmothers of folktales and fairy tales are a combination of a human godmother—a woman who promises to aid a child, particularly in religious instruction—and a magical fairy being.

The most memorable fairy godmother character for Western readers is the character in French courtier and author Charles Perrault's fairy tale "Cinderella." It is this fairy godmother who transformed a pumpkin into a coach, rats into coachmen, and Cinderella into an elegant lady. This type of fairy godmother, almost always an elegant older woman, appears in another French Cinderella tale by Perrault, "*Peau d'Ane,*" or "Donkeyskin." Other types of fairy godmothers are found throughout world lore.

The role of the fairy godmother may be played by the ghost of the heroine's dead mother, a tree spirit (the mother's body lies buried under the tree), or, as found in a Russian tale, a doll that comes to life when the heroine prays. In some cultures, there are no fairy godmothers, per se, but other helpful characters take on a similar role. In a Jewish version of the Cinderella story, for example, it is the prophet Elijah who helps the heroine.

But it is Perrault's fairy godmother character that continues to hold the most influence in modern tales, with the addition of certain contemporary characteristics. The fairy godmother in the 2004 animated movie *Shrek 2,* for example, is a conniving businesswoman.

The term "fairy godmother" is used today in everyday language to describe a philanthropist.

See also: Motifs; Wise Man or Woman.

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Fairy Midwife and Demon Midwife

In the folklore of cultures ranging from Celtic to Jewish, the fairy (or demon) midwife is a mortal woman taken to a strange land or eerie location to deliver a nonhuman or part-human baby.

The basic story is the same, regardless of the culture. The midwife has just gone to bed when she hears a frantic knocking on the door. A mysterious man, who is either cloaked or otherwise disguised, begs for her help—his wife is in labor.

The midwife goes with him to what is either another realm or a cave that has been enchanted to look like a palace. In most versions, the midwife is unable to see through the illusion at first and takes the splendor for reality.

The woman in labor is often a human married to a fairy being, though in Jewish folklore a female demon is in labor. (In Jewish folklore, the word *demon* means an amoral being, somewhat like a nature spirit, rather than

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an evil creature.) The midwife says nothing and delivers the child.

In most versions of the basic tale, the midwife is then given a magic ointment to rub on the baby's eyes. She touches a little of the ointment to her own eyes and can then see through the fairy enchantment.

In all versions, the midwife is rewarded for her labors and is safely returned to her home. One interpretation of the tale is that both fairies and demons are rarely fertile, and as a result have no idea what to do in the rare event of a birth. Another is that the tale represents a real interaction between two cultures, one more advanced than the other.

See also: Tale Types.

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Faithful Companion

The faithful companion is a human folklore character who helps the hero and never betrays him, regardless of any threat of personal danger or even death. This character is found in tales from around the world.

One of the earliest examples is in the Sumerian and Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh. The hero-king's companion is Enkidu. He helps Gilgamesh in several adventures, including the destruction of the monstrous Humbaba and the recovery of lost objects from the underworld. Enkidu is slain by the gods to punish Gilgamesh for his arrogance.

Faithful John

The character Faithful John, from the German folktale of the same name, is the companion to a prince (in some versions, a king). John follows the hero on a quest for a beautiful maiden that the prince wishes to wed. As they are carrying her home across the seas, Faithful John overhears some crows, whose language he understands. The crows foretell three dangers to the prince, from which Faithful John can save him only by sacrificing his own life.

The first danger would threaten the prince as soon as their ship reached port. The prince would see a horse, but if he mounted it, he would lose his bride forever. If someone killed the horse, the prince would be saved. But if the one who killed the horse told the prince the reason why, he would be turned to stone from toe to knee.

The second danger was to occur before the wedding. A bridal garment would lie before the prince. If he were to put it on, it would poison him. Whoever threw the shirt into the fire and told the prince the reason would be turned into stone from knee to heart.

Finally, during the wedding festivities, the queen suddenly would swoon. Unless someone took three drops of blood from her right breast, she would die. But whoever did this and told the prince the reason would be turned into stone from head to foot.

Faithful John saved the prince from the first two dangers, but he did not have to reveal the reasons for his actions. At the wedding feast, the prince misinterpreted Faithful John's motive in bleeding his wife and ordered him to be hanged. On the scaffold, Faithful John told his story. As the saddened prince mourned, his noble friend was turned to stone.

Lakshmana/Luxman

In the Indian epic the *Ramayana,* Rama's brother Lakshmana was his closest friend and companion. They were exiled together and rescued Rama's wife, Sita, from the demon king Ravana.

In South Indian folklore, Lakshmana is called Luxman. He rescued Rama and Sita from various perils, including falling tree limbs and a cobra. When Luxman killed the snake with his sword, a drop of toxic cobra blood fell onto Sita's forehead. Luxman hastily licked it

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off. When Rama saw this, he though Luxman was kissing his wife and scolded him so savagely that Luxman, overwhelmed with grief at this unjust condemnation, was turned to stone.

Modern Companions

The faithful companion is found in literature as well as in modern stories, movies, and television. In literature, Miguel Cervantes's addled would-be knight Don Quixote had comical Sancho Panza as his faithful companion. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's brilliant detective Sherlock Holmes had Dr. Watson as his cohort and chronicler. Other modern examples of faithful companions are the Lone Ranger's friend Tonto, Batman's "boy wonder" sidekick Robin, and Gabrielle, the faithful companion of Xena, Warrior Princess.

See also: Tale Types.

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Faithless Wife

Known throughout the world, the ancient folktale type of the faithless wife features a wife who deceives her husband with a lover. Her actions sometimes lead to her punishment at the hands of her husband or his relatives or to her husband's death.

The faithless wife and her lover are a common team both in mythology and in popular fiction. The earliest known written version of this tale type dates to Egypt in the first millennium B.C.E., and it is generally known by the title "The Two Brothers." In this version of the tale, the faithless wife plots with her lover about killing her husband, but the treacherous duo is defeated by the husband's loyal brother.

In Greek mythology, Queen Clytemnestra and her lover, Aegisthus, plot to kill her husband, King Agamemnon, and succeed. The murdered king is avenged by his son Orestes, who puts the treacherous couple to death.

In the Welsh *Mabinogion,* there is the story of Lleu Law Griffes, who, because of a curse, could not wed a mortal woman. Instead, he married a woman magically made of flowers who betrayed Griffes with a lover. The deceitful couple killed Griffes, but he was magically returned to life by his father, a powerful magician. The wife's punishment was to be turned into an owl.

A related theme is that of the faithless wife who attempts to seduce a man who rejects her advances; she accuses him of rape. In the Old Testament, Potiphar's wife (who is not named) tries and fails to seduce Joseph and accuses him of rape. This accusation leads to Joseph's immediate arrest but later fame at the royal court. The theme also appears in the ancient Greek story of Theseus. His wife, Phaedra, tries and fails to seduce Theseus's son Hippolytus, then accuses the young man of rape, an accusation that leads to his death.

In modern popular fiction, there are many examples of the faithless wife theme, including the 1944 movie *Double Indemnity,* with Barbara Stanwyck as the wife and Fred MacMurray as her lover.

See also: Tale Types.

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Familiar/Familiar Spirit

In folk tradition and particularly during the English witch trials of the early seventeenth century, a familiar, or familiar spirit,

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was a helpful spirit that assisted a witch or magician.

The word *familiar* in this sense comes from the Latin *familiares,* which refers to a familiar or household spirit. In folk tradition, a familiar was similar to an animal helper. These magical animals assisted heroes or heroines to accomplish their goals.

In the case of witch trials, it was believed that the devil gave each witch a familiar as a helper. These companions usually aided the witch in nefarious deeds of black magic. Familiars took ordinary shapes, such as a cat, dog, or bird. It is likely that during the period of witch hunts in England, many women were afraid to walk outside with a pet, since this could be taken as a sign that she was a witch.

In the modern world, especially in modern pagan communities, the concept of a familiar spirit is again that of a helper.

See also: Black Magic; Motifs; White Magic.

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Fantasy

Fantasy is a literary genre that relies on magical and supernatural phenomena that fall outside the natural laws of the present world.

Fantasy shares certain characteristics with the genres of science fiction and horror. All three involve strange, sometimes otherworldly, settings and characters. Science fiction differs from fantasy in that it is set in the future and is generally based on some aspect of science and technology. Horror relies primarily on arousing fear in the reader. Fantasies tends to be more uplifting, with good generally winning out over evil.

Scholars have often considered fantasy to be the earliest genre in all literature. The earliest complete epic available, the Sumerian saga of Gilgamesh, tells of magical events and divine interventions and can therefore be characterized as fantasy. Homer's *Odyssey* also features a great many magical and divine events.

Many of the epic romances of the Middle Ages fit into the category of fantasy as well. These include the Spanish *Amadis of Gaul,* with its swashbuckling hero, and the Italian *Orlando Furioso,* which features wizards and magic galore.

Modern fantasy is often divided into two categories: low and high. Low fantasy generally takes place in the real world with the addition of magic and the supernatural. Terry Pratchett's novels about Discworld fall into this category. Many of these stories are set in a city that is believably seedy. They also fall into the subcategory of humorous fantasy, in which the element of comedy is often predominant.

High fantasy has an epic sweep. Often, the themes are mythic, and the heroes must overcome great ordeals to prove themselves worthy of a goal that is generally nothing less than victory over evil. J.R.R. Tolkien's trilogy *Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955) is a fine example of high fantasy.

Today, the fantasy genre has a strong presence in popular culture. Books such as the Harry Potter series, a wide range of comic books, television programs such as *Medium* and *The Dresden Files,* and fantasy role-playing games are just a few examples. Some scholars believe that the more serious the world seems, the more there is a need for relief through fantasy.

See also: Horror; Mystery Stories; Romance; Science Fiction.

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Fates

In the world's mythology, there is a recurrent theme of three spiritual or supernatural beings that are said to control a person's destiny and life span. These are known as the Fates.

The ancient Egyptians first believed that fate was determined not by three but by seven female deities, called the Hathors. The seven Hathors were seen as a single force, responsible for a human's life span and manner of death. The goddess Meskhenet decided status and career, and the goddess Renenet determined material fortune or misfortune. (The ancient Egyptians also believed that it was possible for a determined human, or one aided by the gods, to change his or her destiny.) By the second half of the second millennium B.C.E., the ancient Egyptians had adopted the concept of a triad of such deities.

In Greek mythology, these beings were known as the Moirai. Originally, there was only one Moirai, then a pair, but eventually the magical number of three came into the belief. The three Moirai were named Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos. The poet Hesiod states that the Moirai were born of a union between Zeus and the Titan Thetis. The Moirai often were portrayed as mature or even old women.

The three Moirai were said to appear whenever a new life and its fate were made. Clotho held the distaff on which the fabric of life was wound. Lachesis spun the thread that gave a newborn its fate. Atropos cut the thread to end life. Lachesis sang of the things that were, Clotho of those that are, and Atropus of the things that would be. The prophecies set by the Moirai could not be changed. No one lived beyond the time they were allotted or escaped the destiny that was set for them.

The Romans also had their triple Fates. Known as the Parcae, or Tria Fata, the three were named Nona, Decuma, and Morta. Like their Greek counterparts, they controlled the destiny of an individual.

In Norse mythology, there were the three Norns who tended the world tree, Yggdrasil. The Norns were Urd (fate), Skuld (necessity), and Verdandi (being). These three controlled the destinies of the gods as well as mortals, and they even directed the unchanging laws of the cosmos. The Norns were said to attend every birth and assign the fate of each newborn baby.

In Lithuanian mythology, three supernatural women called Laima, Karta, and Dekla were responsible for determining destiny.

The Three Weird Sisters are the Anglo-Saxon Fates. The term *wyrd* in the Anglo-Saxon language means destiny, as in "every man has his weird." Shakespeare's three witches of *Macbeth* were derived from the Anglo-Saxon tradition.

See also: Archetype; Meskhenet.

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Faust, Dr. Johann

Dr. Johann Faust lived in Germany at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Faust, sometimes called Faustus, was a medical doctor as well as a student of alchemy, astrology, and philosophy. Probably because of his academic prowess, rumors began to circulate about him even while he was still alive that claimed he practiced black magic. The date and circumstances of Faust's death are unknown, but soon after his passing

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Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's two-part drama *Faust* is based on the medieval Faust legend. Here, the newly youthful Faust meets the innocent maiden Gretchen. In the background, the devil Mephistopheles, disguised as a wealthy man, seduces Gretchen's chaperone. *(Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)*

stories were being told about his making a pact with the devil.

One of the earliest collections of these stories was the *Historia von Doctor J. Faustus,* published in Germany in 1587 by Johann Spies. According to the stories in this collection, Faust made a pact with the devil, exchanging his soul for riches and knowledge. The tales were quickly translated into several languages and became popular across Europe.

In the late 1500s, the English playwright Christopher Marlowe wrote the highly successful play *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*. This dramatic adaptation of the story also featured the pact with the devil and the devil seizing Faust's soul.

At the end of the seventeenth century, the German playwright Johann Wolfgang von Goethe saw puppet shows featuring the story of Faust and was inspired. His first attempt at retelling the Faust story dates to 1780, but the play, *Faust, Part I,* appeared in 1808. It was Goethe who added a love story between Faust and Gretchen (or Margarite), the unfortunate girl he seduced. The second part of the drama was published after Goethe's death.

The Faust story also inspired several musical works. The German composer Richard Wagner created *A Faust Overture* in 1844. In 1857, Franz Liszt finished composing *A Faust Symphony,* which contains musical portraits of Faust, Gretchen, and Mephistopheles, the devil who seizes Faust's soul. The story of Faust also inspired two operas, French composer Charles Gounod's 1855 *Faust* and Italian composer Arrigo Boito's 1868 *Mephistophele.*

This ubiquitous story even inspired a children's rhyme in England:

Doctor Faustus was a good man,
He whipped his scholars now and then,
When he whipped them he made them dance,
Out of Scotland into France,
Out of France into Spain,
And then he whipped them back again!

See also: Deals with the Devil.

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Fenrir

(Norse)

Fenrir was a terrifying wolf being in Norse mythology. He was the unlikely offspring of Loki, the trickster deity of fire, and a female giant named Angrboda.

Fenrir was the oldest of three siblings. The other two were Jormungand, the giant serpent, and Hel, a sister who was literally half alive and half dead—one side of her body was living, the other a corpse.

The Norse gods feared all three of these monstrous beings, so they captured them in the middle of the night from Angrboda's hall. The gods brought the three monsters back to their home in Asgard. There, they threw Jormungand into the ocean and Hel into Niflheim, the underworld. Hel ruled the world of the dead until Ragnarok, the final battle at the end of the world. Fenrir remained in Asgard.

The gods learned of a dangerous prophesy that claimed that Fenrir and his kin would one day bring about Ragnarok. They caught Fenrir and caged him before he was fully grown. Tyr, god of war, was the only one who had the courage to feed and take care of the fierce creature.

As Fenrir grew into his full, terrible size, the gods knew they must take further action before he broke free. They made a chain of iron links, called Laeding, and challenged Fenrir to try to break free. Fenrir easily broke Laeding. The gods made a second chain, far thicker and stronger than the first, and called it Dromi. Fenrir broke that chain, too, with frightening ease.

The gods then realized that they had to use magic. They ordered a magic chain from the dwarves. What the dwarves wrought was Gleipnir, a chain as thin as a spider's strand. It was made out of the footstep of a cat, the roots of a mountain, the beard of a woman, the breath of fishes, the sinews of a bear, and the spittle of a bird. It was stronger than any other chain. The gods lured Fenrir to the Island of Lyngvi and challenged him to break Gleipnir. By now, Fenrir was suspicious, and he would not allow them to bind him. Finally, Tyr offered to put his right hand into Fenrir's mouth to show there was no trickery involved.

The gods bound Fenrir with Gleipnir. When he could not break free, he bit off Tyr's hand. But the gods had won. They tied Gleipnir to another chain and tied that to a boulder, which they drove deep into the earth. Then they placed a sword in Fenrir's mouth, with the hilt resting on his lower jaw and the point against the roof of his mouth.

There Fenrir was to remain until Ragnarok. A further prophecy foretold that when that final battle occurred, Fenrir's chain would break and he would attack and kill Odin, the chief Norse god. Odin's son, Vidar, would then slay Fenrir.

See also: Norse Mythology.

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Ferdowsi/Firdawsi/ Firdusi/Firdousi

(935 C.E.–C. 1020 C.E.)

Ferdowsi, also spelled Firdawsi, Firdusi, or Firdousi, is the pseudonym of the Persian poet Hakim Abol Qasem Ferdowsi Tousi. He

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is the author of *Shah-nameh* (*Epic of Kings*), which has become the Persian national epic.

Ferdowsi was born in 935 C.E. in the small village of Khorasan. He became a landowner and received a comfortable income from his estates. But his income was not sufficient to provide for his daughter's future, so Ferdowsi decided to write an epic for a sultan. He hoped to be paid handsomely for this task, which occupied him for more than thirty years.

The *Shah-nameh*

The poem was based mainly on a prose work called the *Khvatay-namak,* a history of the kings of Persia from mythical times to the reign of Khosrow II (590–628 C.E.). The *Shah-nameh* was written for the court of the Samanid princes of Khorasan, who had revived Persian culture after the Arab conquest of the seventh century. But during Ferdowsi's lifetime, this dynasty was conquered by the Ghaznavid Turks, and the new ruler of Khorasan, Mahmoud of Ghaznavi, was not interested in Ferdowsi or his work.

Ferdowsi went to Sultan Mahmoud in person and secured the ruler's acceptance of the finished poem. But Ferdowsi was a Shi'ite and the court was Sunni, so when Mahmoud consulted some of his people as to the poet's reward, they said that that Ferdowsi should be given only 50,000 dirhams, which was a relatively small amount. Mahmoud, a fervent Sunni, agreed with them, and paid Ferdowsi even less, only 20,000 dirhams. Stories claim that the bitterly disappointed poet went to the baths. There he had a draft of beer, and (to show how paltry the payment was) split the entire petty sum between the bath attendant and the beer seller.

Word of this disrespectful gesture reached the royal court. Fearing the sultan's anger, Ferdowsi fled. First he went to the city of Herat, where he stayed in hiding for six months. From there, he traveled to Mazanderan, where he found refuge at the court of Mahmoud's rival, Shahreyar.

The Preface

At Shahreyar's court, Ferdowsi composed a satire of 100 verses about Sultan Mahmoud and put it into the preface of the *Shah-nameh.* He read it to Shahreyar and offered to dedicate the poem to him, since Shahreyar was a true descendant of the ancient kings of Persia, unlike Mahmoud.

Shahreyar, however, persuaded Ferdowsi to dedicate the epic to Mahmoud and remove the satire. Shahreyar purchased the satire from Ferdowsi, and it has survived intact.

Mahmoud eventually regretted treating Ferdowsi shabbily. He sent the poet some 60,000 dinars in indigo, purportedly at just about the time that Ferdowsi died, somewhere between 1020 and 1026.

See also: Rustam; *Retelling: Shah-nameh.*

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Filipino Mythology

The Philippines has developed a mixed culture from the blending of foreign influences with several indigenous elements. The religious beliefs are as varied as the people, with about sixty different ethnic groups inhabiting the archipelago. The majority of Filipinos are Christians, but there are still some followers of older beliefs.

A few of the more important deities are listed here, as are some of the supernatural beings that are related to Filipino mythic beliefs. Many of the concepts and deities are common to more than one ethnic group, but those identified with only one group are listed separately.

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The Bagobo People

Eugpamolak Manobo is the chief deity and creator. He lives in the heavens and watches over humans. Any human who does not make proper offerings to him (he dislikes bloody sacrifices) is punished. Eugpamolak Manobo is invited to every Bagobo ritual.

The Bilaan People

Mele, or Melu, is the creator of the world and of humanity. He lives in the heavens and does not meddle in human affairs unless the people pray to him and make him offerings. Aiding Mele in the creation were the lesser deities Diwata, Fiuweigh, and Saweigh. In some accounts, Diwata is Mele's wife. In others, Diwata is Mele's brother.

The Kapampangan People

Malyari and Sinukuan are two hermaphrodite deities that are forever at odds with each other. Malyari rules the night and the Moon, and Sinukuan rules the day and the Sun. Their never-ending conflict keeps the balance of life and nature.

Malyari, whose home is in Mount Pinatubo, is said to have been responsible for the eruption of the volcano that occurred in June 1991.

The Tagalog People

Bathala is the creator of the universe. Some accounts state that another god, Kabunian, created people because he was lonely.

Bathala's spouse is Lakapati, deity of fertility and cultivation. In some myths, Lakapati begins creation and Bathala finishes the job. Mayari, goddess of the Moon, is their daughter.

The Tinguian People

The Tinguian people live in the mountains of central Luzon. Tadaklan, their thunder god, lives in the sky with his wife, Agemem. Tadaklan's dog Kimat causes lightning. At Tadaklan's command, Kimat will bite a house, meaning it is struck by lightning.

Together Tadakan and Agemem created the Sun, the Moon, Earth, and the stars. The Sun married a mortal woman, Aponibolinayen, who lives in the heavens with her husband.

Mythic and Folkloric Beings

There are a number of helpful, or at least harmless, beings in Filipino mythology. These include Agta, a small, black, solitary being that is generally helpful to fishermen and likes to smoke cigars; the *bagat,* a large, harmless dog that can be seen on the night of a full Moon or after a rain; and *diwatas,* the tree or nature spirits that bless those who help the forest but curse those who harm it. There also are the *dwende* (the name means dwarf in Spanish). These small beings may be related to European folk-beings; they are very similar to the helpful house spirits of Europe.

The *kama-kama* are the Filipino "little people." They hoard treasure and come out only at twilight. If humans treat the *kama-kama* kindly, they do no harm. But they give powerful, painful pinches to any human who angers them.

The *mantyo* is a tall, thin forest being with long hair. It lives among tall trees, preferably near kapok trees, and usually is friendly to humans.

The *batibat,* which bears a resemblance to the dryads of Greek myth, also lives in the forest. This female tree spirit resembles a big, fat woman. If her tree is left alone, she is harmless. But if her tree is cut down, she will follow the wood. If the wood is made into a bed, the *batibat* will cause nightmares for anyone sleeping in that bed. If the sleeper can wriggle his or her big toe during the nightmare, or bite his or her thumb, the batibat will leave and presumably look for another tree.

There are many malicious creatures in Filipino mythology, some of which are deadly to humans. The *aswang* is a ghoul that disguises itself as a harmless animal during the day and becomes a gaunt monster searching for human prey at night. The *boroka,* a hybrid monster with the head of a woman, the body of a

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horse, and the wings of an eagle, preys on children. The *dila* is a spirit tongue that slips up between the bamboo planks of a house's floor to lick people to death. In the ocean, the *ukoy,* which resembles an octopus, sometimes kills swimmers if they come too close.

The *manananggal* is a vampire that looks like a wild-eyed woman. She can split herself in half during the time of the full Moon. The upper half then grows wings and flies at night seeking blood. The way to destroy the manananggal is to find the lower half and cover it with garlic or salt, making it impossible for the manananggal to rejoin its two halves. Once day breaks, the divided manananggal will die.

Somewhat similar to the vampiritic manananggal is the *marmanhig*. This undead being hunts humans, tickling them to death before devouring them. A marmanhig, though, can be slain by throwing water on it.

With so many strange and exotic beings and so many possible stories, the world of Filipino mythology and folklore is a rich source for storytellers.

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Fingernails

There is a great deal of world folklore attached to the homely human fingernail, from its shape, to the markings on it, to how it is trimmed.

The shape of fingernails is said to signify important information about an individual. Someone with well-shaped nails is trustworthy, while someone with crooked fingernails is not.

The number of white spots on a fingernail is said to predict the number of offspring or friends to come, or even how many years one has to live. Other traditions relate to the placement of those spots. For instance, a white spot or spots on the thumbnail mean a coming gift. Still others claim that a white spot on a nail signifies a lie told.

The action of cutting or paring of fingernails is also attached to folk beliefs. It is said that a baby's fingernails should not be cut. They should instead be bitten off until the child is a year old, or the baby will grow up to be a thief.

In Western cultures, fingernails should not be cut on a Friday or a Sunday. Nails cut on a Monday mean news; on Tuesday, new shoes; on Wednesday, travel; and on Thursday, illness. Nails cut on a Saturday prophesy meeting a lover on Sunday.

In Central Asia, to cut one's fingernails at night is to court death. In some African and African American beliefs, having a dream about cutting one's fingernails means disappointment.

Fingernails, once cut, should always be burned, buried, or cast into running water so that no evil spells can be worked over them. In folk magic, the nails of a sick person might be cut and the clippings tossed into a fire so that the illness would burn away and leave the person healthy.

Vampires are said to have long, curving fingernails. This folk belief is probably linked to the also folkloric belief that the fingernails on a corpse continue to grow for a time.

A modern folk belief falling into the category of urban folklore states that a fancy department store or cosmetic company will pay for women's long fingernails. This story has been proven false, yet it has not been completely eliminated.

See also: Hands.

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Fink, Mike

(c. 1770–1823)

American folk hero Mike Fink was a riverboatman who ran keelboats up and down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers in the early nineteenth century. Possibly born in 1770 near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Mike Fink is an example of how folklore can overwhelm fact.

Fink first appeared as a folk character in the late 1820s. The stories about him feature a boisterous and hard-drinking boatman. He was also a scout and excellent marksman.

Fink's tales were characterized by brawls and overblown boasts that are related to the swashbuckling bombasts of early Celtic warriors. For example, he is said to have declared, "I can outrun, out-jump, out-shoot, out-brag, an' out-fight, rough-an'-tumble, no holts barred, any man on both sides the river from Pittsburgh to New Orleans an' back ag'in to St. Louiee."

Davy Crockett, another historic personage who became a folk hero, is said to have given Mike Fink the label "half horse and half alligator."

Fink is said to have been killed in the Rocky Mountains by one of his companions, in a fight over one of Fink's many paramours. He died in 1823.

See also: Tall Tales.

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Firebird

(Russian)

The Firebird is a magical bird in Russian folklore, perhaps the size of a peacock, with feathers that shine like gold or flame and eyes that gleam or blaze. Its feathers are said to be so bright that if it lands in a garden at night, the entire garden is lit up more brightly than day. A single Firebird feather can light a room.

The Firebird appears in several Russian folktales as the goal of the hero's quest. The hero generally finds a glowing feather. He is warned by a helper that trouble will come from taking the feather. The czar finds out about the hero's discovery and asks him to capture the bird. Related tales from other Slavic countries change the Firebird to a golden peahen.

The Firebird is not described as a talking and intelligent being in the folktales. Instead, it is a symbol of beauty and of the quest.

Igor Stravinsky's 1910 ballet titled *The Firebird* gave the bird a more active role. The hero, Prince Ivan, captured the Firebird. The Firebird begged for her life and promised to assist him if he spared her. Any depictions in stories of the Firebird as a shape-shifter or a magical helper with human intelligence are not authentic lore but are modern inventions that derive from Stravinsky's work.

See also: Slavic Mythology.

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Fish and Fishing Folklore

Tales of magical fish and fishing folk beliefs, myths, and folktales exist all over the world, wherever there are fish and fishermen.

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Sometimes, the magical fish can talk and supplies vital information to the hero. In other tales, the fish grants a wish or wishes to the individual who saves it. "The Fisherman and His Wife" is a common world tale in which a poor fisherman saves a magical fish and is promised three wishes. The fisherman's greedy wife wishes for so many powers that with the third wish, the couple is back where they started, wiser but no richer than when the tale began.

In mythology, a magical fish may be more than it seems. In a Hindu myth of the great flood, Manu (or Manu Vaivasvate) saves a tiny fish, which promises to return the favor. Manu puts the fish in a pot, but it grows so quickly that he moves it to a larger tank, then to a lake, and at last to the sea. There the fish warns Manu to build a boat, since a great flood is coming that will wash everything away. Manu builds his boat, and the fish tows it to a safe haven. The fish, it is revealed, is the god Vishnu in his incarnation as Matsya.

In Polynesia, Tinirau, the shark god, is god of the ocean and fish. He is either a fearsome shark ready to devour any prey or a half-shark, half-man being. In the latter incarnation, his left side is in shark form, and the right is human.

In the Hawaiian Islands, the shark god was called Ukupanipo. He could drive the fish to the shores if people pleased him, or drive them away if he grew angry. In Central America, Chac Uayab Xoc was the Mayan fish god, who could give men fish or sink fishing boats and devour fishermen.

In Islamic folk tradition, Labuna is the name of a gigantic fish that swims forever around the ocean, bearing on its head a giant bull that holds the earth between its horns. In the beliefs of the Central Asian peoples, the world is supported directly by three fish: one holds up the East, one the West, and one the center.

Fishermen have their own folk beliefs. Many cultures hold that if the first fish of the day is female, it prophesies a good catch.

In Ireland, if there was a good herring season, the custom was to eat herring from tail to head to make the herring season last longer. The Scots believed that if the catch looked to be poor, the cure was to throw one of the fishermen overboard, then pull him up as if he were the start of a good catch. Fishermen in both England and the United States believed that if a man stopped his fishing to count his catch, he would catch no more fish that day.

Finally, there are the tall tales told by almost every fisherman about the fish larger and more wonderful than any other—the classic "fish story" about "the one that got away."

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Flood, The

(Mesopotamian)

Stories about a great flood are known in many civilizations. The earliest written example is in Sumerian literary sources that date to the end of the third millennium B.C.E.

The Sumerian kings list, a literary composition probably written in the twenty-first century B.C.E., contains a list of eight kings of five cities from the presumed beginnings of kingship to the time of the flood. The last ruler was a sage named Ziusudra, who is called Atrahasis or Uta-napishti in other Mesopotamian sources. The kings list indicates that the Sumerians believed the flood to have been a localized event that occurred early in the third millennium B.C.E.

Sumerian Flood Myth

Stories about the beginnings of the flood may be attributable to the annual spring flooding of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, or possibly changes in ancient sea levels. A Sumerian

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flood story dating to the beginning of the second millennium B.C.E. begins after the gods created the black-headed people, the Sumerians. Animals multiplied everywhere, and gods were assigned to rule over the cities of Sumer.

The gods were displeased with the people and set out to destroy them. A storm began and a great flood swept over the land for seven days and seven nights. Ziusudra, whose name means "life of distant days," was the only Sumerian to survive the flood. He and the animals were safe in his ark. When the floodwater receded, Ziusudra was granted eternal life by the gods An and Enlil. Ziusudra settled in the land of Dilmun.

The final story in the epic of Gilgamesh, called *The Death of Gilgamesh,* includes an excerpt about the flood. According to this myth, in remote days the divine assembly created the deluge in order to destroy humankind. Only one human, Ziusudra, survived the onslaught. From that time forward, human life was finite. Only the gods possessed eternal life.

Babylonian Myth

Sumerian stories of the flood probably influenced the later Babylonian versions. The story of the hero Atra-hasis begins before the creation of the human race.

The junior gods had the task of configuring the earth by digging rivers, canals, and marshes. These deities felt that their work was too difficult and decided to revolt. They marched to the dwelling of Enlil, the chief god of Earth. The senior god Enki suggested that the gods create humans to relieve the junior gods of their burden. The birth goddess was summoned, and she created humans out of clay. The people were able to reproduce but were immortal, so an explosion of human population occurred.

Enlil became even more disturbed by events on Earth. The noise from the people was so overwhelming that he could not obtain his needed rest. Enlil decided that the creation of humans had been a mistake, and a drastic solution was needed. Enlil sent a plague, but the god Ea intervened on behalf of humans and told the hero Atra-hasis to placate the plague god with offerings. The plague ended, and the people became more numerous than before.

Enlil ordered the rain to stop and induced famine. But again, Ea came to the aid of humankind and sent rain to end the drought.

Frustrated, Enlil decided to bring about a flood to destroy all of humankind. This time, Ea advised Atra-hasis to build an ark. The animals and Atra-hasis's family were placed on board, and the storm began.

For seven days and seven nights, the storm raged. After the flood subsided, Atra-hasis made a sacrifice to the gods. When Enlil saw the vessel, he demanded to know how the humans had survived. Ea confessed that he was responsible.

At the end of the story, Enlil decided that only Atra-hasis and his wife would be granted eternal life. As for the rest of humankind, their days would be numbered, and the human population would be controlled through the creation of women who were unable to bear children.

The Epic of Gilgamesh

A detailed version of the flood story is found in the eleventh tablet of the Babylonian text *The Epic of Gilgamesh,* which was composed at the end of the second millennium B.C.E. The hero in this version is called Uta-napishti, which means "I found life." He was warned about the flood by the god Ea and told to abandon his property and wealth and build a ship. Uta-napishti built an ark six decks high. He loaded everything he owned onto the ship, including all of his gold and silver. He allowed his animals, family, and artisans to join him on board.

The storm began the next morning. For six days and seven nights, the wind blew, and the deluge flattened the land. On the seventh day, the storm ended, and the ocean grew calm. Uta-napishti's boat ran aground on a mountain.

After seven more days, Uta-napishti sent out a dove that returned after finding no other

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place to land. He then sent forth a swallow, but it, too, returned. Finally, a raven was sent out. The bird discovered that the waters had receded, found food, and did not return. Uta-napishti made an offering to the gods.

When Enlil discovered that people had survived the deluge, he was furious. Calmed by Ea, Enlil decreed that from that time forward only Uta-napishti and his wife would be endowed with eternal life. The time of all other humans on Earth would be limited.

Biblical Flood

The Gilgamesh version of the flood closely parallels the biblical accounts found in the book of Genesis. The story of Noah's ark, however, contains unique theological elements not found in any of the Mesopotamian versions.

In Genesis, the flood was sent to punish humans for their evil behavior, rather than for overpopulating the earth. In the aftermath of the biblical flood, the hero, Noah, is not granted immortality. Also, the Bible emphasizes the Hebrew god Yahweh's promise to never again destroy his creation. Noah and his family were favored with divine blessing and told to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth."

Greek Myth

The most recent Mesopotamian version of the flood story was written in Greek by Berossos, a priest of the god Bel, in about 275 B.C.E. The hero in this version is called Xisuthros, echoing the name of the Sumerian hero, Ziusudra. The Greek god Kronos appeared to Xisuthros in a dream and warned him of a flood. The hero was ordered to dig a hole and bury all the writings in the city of Sippar. He was then to build a boat and fill it with his kin, friends, birds, and animals.

After the flood, the boat was moored on a mountain. Xisuthros disembarked and made sacrifices to the gods. Xisuthros and his family disappeared, leaving behind those who had accompanied them on the boat. A voice told the survivors that Xisuthros, his wife, and the boat pilot would henceforth dwell with the gods. The others were instructed to return to Babylon, rescue the buried writings, and pass them on to their descendants. This idea of protecting wisdom is unique to the Greek version of the story.

There are countless other flood myths from other cultures. Most share the common element of a hero and an ark. In some more mountainous regions, such as the Pacific Northwest of the United States, the hero and his companions survive by climbing to the top of a mountain.

Ira Spar

See also: Dilmun; Ziusudra.

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Flying Dutchman

The *Flying Dutchman* is perhaps the most famous of all the phantom or ghostly ships that sail the seas. The ship usually is sighted in stormy weather off the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa, but it occasionally has been seen in other locations.

The Dutch captain of the ship, who is often given the name Captain van der Decken (or Vanderdecken, Van Demien, Van Straaten, or Ramhout van Dam), attempted to round the ever-treacherous Cape of Good Hope during a horrific storm. Some versions date the story to 1641, when a Dutch ship is said to have sunk in the region. The sailors wanted to

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turn back, but the captain refused, holding his course and swearing that he would continue to sail even if God or the devil tried to stop him. He shouted out, "I *will* round this cape, should I need to sail until doomsday!"

Those rash words brought down a terrible curse upon the captain and his men. They were doomed to sail the oceans for all eternity.

In an alternate version of the story, the captain swears at the devil, who then condemns him to sail forever. In this case, only a woman's love could break the curse.

Whatever the cause of the curse, the captain has been seen piloting his spectral vessel through the centuries. He has been blamed for leading other ships onto rocks and hidden reefs, and for spoiling sailors' food supplies.

Perhaps the earliest recorded sighting of the cursed captain and his ship, the *Flying Dutchman,* was made by a British sea captain and his crew in 1835. They reported the ghost ship as nearly running into their own ship, then vanishing.

The most prestigious sighting of the *Flying Dutchman* was made on July 11, 1881. Aboard the Royal Navy's HMS *Bacchante,* the midshipman, who would later become King George V, recorded that the lookout man and the officer of the watch had seen the *Flying Dutchman*: "A strange red light as of a phantom ship all aglow, in the midst of which light the mast, spars and sails of a brig 200 yards distant stood out in strong relief." There have been other sightings of the ghost ship since then, in 1939 and in 1942.

The cursed captain and his ship captured the imagination of German composer Richard Wagner. His opera, titled *Der Fliegende Hollander* (*The Flying Dutchman*), premiered in 1843.

The vision of the *Flying Dutchman* may be a trick of certain atmospheric conditions or simply the result of the vivid imaginations of men at sea. No satisfactory explanation of the phenomenon has ever been made.

See also: Deals with the Devil.

In this dramatic painting from about 1870, a ship at sea comes across the mythical ghost-ship known as the *Flying Dutchman.* Sightings of the eerie vessel were believed to forecast disaster. *(Fine Art Photographic/Hulton Archive/Getty Images)*

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Fools

Fools are accidental heroes, innocents who stumble through danger and fortune in total oblivion. Others plot and scheme around these characters, but fools step over the most elaborate snares without tripping over or even noticing them.

There are several different types of fool: the jester, the simpleton, the wise fool, and the idiot. The character of the fool is found in every culture—from Native American sacred clowns and the dimwitted heroes of myth and fairytale to J.R.R. Tolkien's hobbits.

Jesters

Jesters are clowns, usually by profession. In story as in history, jesters served in the courts of kings and noblemen. Often they were dwarves, like the first recorded fool, who served an Egyptian pharaoh, or were physically impaired.

Jesters mocked the solemnity of the royal court. They alone could speak freely, often pointing out hard truths to a king who would not accept them from any other lips. Humor softened the blow so the king was able to laugh at the jest, even as he considered the serious point underlying it.

Native American Clowns

Similar to the Western court jester is the Native American sacred clown. Many tribes have clowns, such as the Hopi *kachinas,* the Sioux *heyoka,* which means "contrary," the Zuni *newekwe* clowns, and the Pueblo *koshares*. These clowns dress outrageously, sometimes cross-dressing, and ridicule religious ceremonies with irreverent, bawdy, and disgusting antics. The heyoka invert everything, saying yes when they mean no, wearing furs in the summer, and performing everyday tasks backward.

To the Western sensibility, humor and mockery have little place in the solemnities of ritual, but to the cultures in which such clowns appear, humor is as important as solemnity. Far from disrupting the spiritual sense of ritual, these fools provide a crucial balance, reminding participants not to take themselves too seriously.

Simpletons

The simpleton frequently appears as the youngest son or daughter in a fairy tale. Often a daydreamer who lacks ambition or traditional skills and who spends all his or her time talking to animals, the youngest child is scorned and nicknamed Simpleton, Dummling, or some variation on the same theme. He or she is sent out with bread and water while his elder siblings eat cake and drink wine. But it is this youngest child who succeeds where the older, more traditionally capable siblings suffer disaster.

The simpleton's success usually turns on the very qualities that once earned the child scorn. The animals the simpleton has befriended come to his or her aid, often performing with ease the supposedly impossible tasks set before the child. A simpleton's lack of ambition allows the child to focus only on the task at hand and not be tempted away by gold, fame, or empty pleasure.

In one such tale, the youngest prince wins a princess by riding to her palace straight down the center of a road paved with gold. His brothers, who were more concerned with the precious metal gleaming under their horses' hooves, veered to the side of the road and thus were turned away.

The simpleton's innocent trust can lead to trouble, however. There are many tales about three brothers, in which the youngest brother is warned to leave his elder siblings in their traps. Out of softheartedness, he frees them.

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His trust is then rewarded by treachery: The brothers rob him of his prize, abandon him in a well or other lonely spot to die, and ride home to claim all the credit and reward. Once again, however, the animals or a sage once helped by the simpleton come to his rescue, and he is freed to expose his brothers' treachery and reclaim his reward.

Sometimes, the simpleton stumbles into fortune quite by accident. The hero of the Grimms' tale "The Golden Goose" walks through town oblivious to the train of greedy townsfolk who have tried to steal his goose, only to wind up stuck to it and to each other. The hero is also unaware that a moody princess's father has offered her hand to anyone who can make her laugh. Naturally, she laughs at the spectacle of the goose-boy with his absurd followers, and they are married (much to the goose-boy's surprise).

Wise Fools

Wise fools are more commonly found in myth and religious tales than in folktales. Like simpletons, they are unworldly and take no interest in the usual pursuits of wealth, fame, and pleasure. But where a simpleton's lack of sense comes from innocence and inexperience, the wise fool deliberately turns his or her back on the world, renouncing a material life in favor of a spiritual one.

Zen Fools

The Zen tradition of Japan features many wise fools. The practice of Zen involves riddles, the answers to which defy traditional logic. The riddles serve to shock the listener out of conventional thought patterns with unpredictable masters and seemingly random violence.

The Zen master Seiogyu often is painted riding backward on an ox, as is Lao-tzu, the fifth-century Chinese author of the *Tao Te Ching,* one of the primary texts of Taoism. There are also several Zen poets, including Ikkyu Sojun, Hajuin Ekaku, and Taigo Ryokan, whose name means "great fool."

Fools in Christendom

In the Christian tradition, several saints fit the profile of the wise fool. Saint Francis, who talked to animals and preached to birds, "married" poverty in a very literal wedding ceremony and ran naked through the streets. Saint Simeon sat atop a column in the desert to preach. And Saint Philip of Neri wore his clothes wrong side out and shaved half his head.

Women, such as Saint Lucy, would destroy their beauty to scare off unwanted suitors so they could dedicate their lives to God. Countless other saints may not have gone to such lengths, but nevertheless made themselves fools in the eyes of the world by deliberately embracing a poor, uncomfortable lifestyle. This is a choice that can seem baffling, if not insane, to those untouched by religious inspiration.

Another common Christian fool is God's clown. He is a monk who, in some versions, was once a tumbler, juggler, or other common entertainer. He secretly performs in front of an image of Jesus (or in some versions the Virgin Mary). When his fellow monks discover him doing this, they are horrified. But far from seeing the clown's crude offerings as blasphemy, the divine figure bestows grace upon him, often appearing at the moment of his death.

Arthurian Fools

The Arthurian legends of Great Britain give us the sheltered would-be knight Perceval. In his most famous story, Perceval is too naive to ask the wounded Fisher King the one question that would free both the king and his dying lands. Suddenly, the castle vanishes, and Perceval is forced to wander for years until he can find the castle again and undo his mistake.

Another fool-knight is Gareth, youngest brother of Sir Gawain. Gareth did not wish to ride on his celebrated brother's fame and came to Camelot under an assumed name. He worked his way up from a kitchen boy to a knight on his own merits. Gareth is mocked and ridiculed by Kay the seneschal, by most of

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the Round Table knights (though, notably, King Arthur treats him with courtesy and respect), and by Dame Lyonors, whose quest he undertakes. Gareth endures this abuse patiently. Eventually, his deeds earn the respect of Dame Lyonors and of the entire Round Table.

Eastern Fools

Sometimes, the wisdom of fools is, or at least seems to be, inadvertent. The Persian couple Laila and Majnu are fools for love, not God. Majnu is famous for kissing the feet of a dog that walked on the street where his beloved Laila lived. Readers of this doomed romance have drawn parallels between it and the love of the divine, for which all rules of decorum and propriety are thrown aside. This is the divine ecstasy that led to the poetry of Rumi and the whirling dance of the dervishes.

Mullah Nasreddin is another Middle Eastern fool. Usually identified as either Persian or Turkish, Nasreddin appears in stories that originate from nearly every nation and culture in the region. Nasreddin is a master of the ridiculous.

Some of Nasreddin's antics include the following: He searches for a missing key under a streetlight because "the light is better here" than where he actually lost it; he does not recognize himself when someone changes clothes with him; like Lao-tsu and Seiogyu, he rides backward on his donkey; and he commits horrible social blunders, then hides to try to avoid their consequences. Nasreddin does not appear to be acting out of any deliberate wisdom, but his antics mirror the everyday absurdities of the human condition and his contorted logic shows us the limits of ordinary reasoning.

The Idiot

Unlike the jester, who masks wisdom in humor, the simpleton, who acts out of pure innocence, and the wise fool, who deliberately ignores society's rules, the idiot is just plain stupid—someone to laugh at, not with. He is often the butt of a trickster's jokes and schemes.

Simpletons can grow in wisdom, but teaching and experience alike roll off the idiot without the slightest effect. This sort of fool is more likely to appear in folktales or fairy tales rather than myth or religious texts. Generally a commoner, the idiot is low in rank and in the esteem of neighbors. Where the traditional hero survives by strength, skill, and (usually) magical aid and the trickster survives by wit, the idiot survives by pure dumb luck.

There are cases, however, in which the idiot does not survive. Sometimes, often in cautionary or teaching tales, idiots are destroyed due to their utter lack of comprehension of the world around them. The Grimm brothers' tales, and similar folktales told across Europe and America, are full of idiots who avoid catastrophe by being too stupid to react to a bad situation in the conventional way. This is a truly inspired idiocy—separated from wisdom only by the fact that it is entirely accidental and often, ironically, is seen as wisdom by those who witness it.

Tricksters as Fools

Tricksters are closely related to fools, in that both often do their work through humor. Some characters play both roles, but the two are usually very different creatures. The trickster plots and schemes; if he gets into trouble, it is because he has entangled himself in his own devious snares. The fool does not play such an active role; instead, he is carried by his story.

Many of the Native American animal tricksters also play the part of the fool: Coyote, Inktomi the Spider, Rabbit, and Tortoise, to name just a few. Whether they are tricksters or fools depends on which tribe is telling the stories and on what lesson the stories are meant to teach. It is a tribute to the depth and flexibility of these animal figures that they can move from one role to another with such ease.

Fools in Jewish Lore

In Jewish lore, which is renowned for laughing at itself and its tribulations, there is an entire

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town of fools. It is said that in the beginning two angels flew over the world, one with a sack of wise folk and the other with one full of fools, scattering equal numbers of each in every land. As they flew over the Polish town of Chelm, the bag of fools ripped open, spilling out the entire population of the town.

There are numerous stories about the fools of Chelm. The ridiculous situations they find themselves in, or get themselves into, are made even more amusing by the self-importance of the townsfolk and their firm belief that they and their actions are the epitome of wisdom. They try to capture the Moon in a water barrel so it can light their streets every night and not only when it "feels like it." They punish an insolent carp who slapped the rabbi with its tail. (The "punishment" involved keeping the carp prisoner in a bathtub rather than making it into gefilte fish. The carp was eventually dumped into the sea.) The people of Chelm have endless debates over who is the wisest. They combine foolish behavior with pseudo-intellectual posturing, and all of this is seasoned with a healthy dose of dry Jewish wit.

Whatever the type, fools serve a deceptively simple purpose: to make people laugh. But to laugh at a fool is to laugh at oneself. The fool turns a symbolic mirror on his audience, like the German clown Till Eulenspiegel did, literally, to the victims of his jests.

In laughing at the fool, we are gently led to admit the frailties and follies that are a part of being human, whether we acknowledge them at the time or not.

Shanti Fader

See also: Noodle Tales/Simpleton Tales; Wise Men of Chelm.

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Frame Stories

Frame stories are unifying narratives that hold one or more stories within their beginnings and endings. Other stories, which may or may not be related to the frame story, are presented between these story "bookends."

An early example of a frame story is the first century C.E. Roman poet Ovid's work, the *Metamorphoses*. In this narrative poem, several stories are nested, one within another.

One of the most famous examples of a frame story is *The Thousand and One Nights* (c. 800 C.E.). The character Scheherazade tells a series of stories to the king over the course of a thousand and one nights. Within this work is the "Tale of Sinbad," which is also a frame story—Sinbad the sailor tells the stories of his adventures to Sinbad the landsman.

Another famous frame story is found in Geoffrey Chaucer's fourteenth-century *The Canterbury Tales*. The frame in this work is the story of a group of pilgrims passing the time on their journey to Canterbury by telling stories. The same style of frame story appears in Giovanni Boccaccio's mid-fourteenth-century *Decameron*.

Frame stories are sometimes used in amusing ways. American author Washington Irving pretended that his *Sketch Book* (1819–1820) was written by an imaginary fellow named Geoffrey Crayon. Irving may have used this device to allow his narrator to voice opinions that were not necessarily Irving's own.

There are several examples of the frame-story technique in twentieth-century literature. Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness* (1902) took place on the deck of a British ship. Initially, the story is presented by an anonymous narrator who introduces Captain Marlow. The rest of the novel is narrated by Marlow.

Edgar Rice Burroughs, creator of Tarzan and many other characters, used frame stories in several of his works. In *A Princess of Mars*

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(1912) Burroughs pretends to be reading the story written by the protagonist, John Carter, so it is essentially a story within a story. William Goldman wrote *The Princess Bride* (1973) under the pen name of S. Morgenstern. The narrator is supposedly Morgenstern's grandfather, who tells the young Morgenstern the story of the princess bride.

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Freischutz

(German)

The term *freischutz* means free shooter. It refers to a German folktale in which a marksman makes a pact with the devil.

In this tale, Satan took the form of Samiel, the black huntsman of Wolf's Glen. The marksman was given seven magic bullets, six of which would hit whatever the marksman wished. The seventh bullet, though, was controlled by the devil.

In a less dark variation on the folktale, a marksman sold his soul to the devil in order to improve his shooting. In this bargain, the devil was supposed to return seven years later to claim the marksman's soul. But the marksman could be taken only if the devil could identify the creature at which the man aimed. When the devil returned, he came upon a weird-looking creature. It was the man's wife, who had covered herself with molasses and then with a coating of feathers. The devil was unable to identify this strange creature and was forced to vanish without the man's soul.

Carl Maria von Weber's opera *Der Freischütz* tells the story of Max, a forester who lost to a villager at target practice. Unless Max could improve his aim, he would lose both the honor of being a forester and the hand of his beloved Agathe. Another forester, the grim, forbidding Kaspar, told Max about the magic bullets that never miss and promised that if Max met him in the Wolf's Glen that night, he would make him some of these bullets. Max agreed.

Max was unaware that Kaspar had sold his soul to Samiel (or Zamiel) the Wild Huntsman and planned to hand Max over to the devil in his place. Together, the two men molded seven magic bullets. Six would fly true; the seventh would go where the devil wished.

Sure enough, the next day, six bullets flew true for Max. Only the seventh, the devil's bullet, remained. Max shot at a dove—but realized too late that he had aimed at Agathe's white dress. She fell but had merely fainted. The seventh bullet sped past her to the true target, Kaspar. He was instantly slain, and the devil claimed him. Max confessed what he had done, was forgiven, and won Agathe's hand.

See also: Deals with the Devil; Operas and Their Stories.

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Frey and Freya

(Norse)

In Norse mythology, Frey and his sister Freya are the children of Njord, god of the wind and sea. They are the most beautiful of the Vanir, the race of peace-loving gods. When the Aesir, the main Norse deities, merged with the Vanir, Frey became known as the Lord of the Aesir.

Frey was the Norse deity of the Sun, rain, and plentiful harvests. He also ruled the *alfar,* the elf folk. Rather than living in Asgard, the home of Norse deities, Frey lived in Alfheim,

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The brother and sister gods of Norse fertility, Frey and Freya were the most beautiful of the peace-loving Norse gods. These bronze depictions are from the Viking age. *(Both images: © Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY)*

or elf-home, and he was married to the giant Gerd. Frey fell so madly in love with Gerd that he gave up his sword in exchange for her hand. This left him unarmed for Ragnarok, the mythic end of the world. As a result, Frey would be the first god to die.

Frey rode in a chariot pulled by a magical golden boar, called Gullinbursti, which means "golden-bristled." The dwarves made Frey a magical ship, called *Skinbladnir,* or "wooden-bladed." *Skinbladnir* steered itself and was able to shrink down to pocket-size.

Frey's shield-bearer and servant was Skirnir, who received Frey's sword in exchange for his help in securing Gerd's hand. Frey's other servant was Beyla, goddess of bees. Since Frey was a fertility god, he was often portrayed as bluntly sexual, and his cult was said to include actions that shocked later Christians. The center of his cult was Uppsala in Sweden.

Freya, Frey's sister, was the beautiful young goddess of love and fertility, who watched over the crops and new life. Freya loved all things bright, from flowers to music, and she was fond of the alfar. It is said that Freya was once married to a deity named Od, but he disappeared, and she cried tears of gold.

Freya had several magical and valuable items. The necklace of the Brisings, called the Brisingamen, made Freya irresistible to men and gods. The necklace also supported any army that Freya favored on the battlefield. Freya also possessed a cloak of bird feathers that allowed anyone wearing it to change into a falcon.

Freya's chariot was pulled by two great cats. She lived in Folkyang, or the field of folk. In this beautiful palace, love songs were always played. Women of worth resided at Freya's hall after death.

See also: Norse Mythology.

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Frigga/Frigg

(Norse)

Frigga, or Frigg, was one of the chief goddesses of Norse mythology. She was one of the Aesir, the principal race of Norse gods. Her husband was Odin, the supreme god. Frigga was the goddess of love and fertility, as well as the patron of marriage, motherhood, the domestic arts, and household management.

Frigga had a gift for prophecy and knew every person's destiny, but she never told what she knew. As Odin's wife, she was the only other deity who was permitted to sit on his throne, called Hlidskjalf. From this vantage point, she could look out over the universe.

Frigga's hall in Asgard was called Fensalir, which means "water halls" or "marsh halls." Frigga's companion was Eir, goddess of healing, and her attendants were Hlin, a protective goddess, Fulla, a fertility goddess, and Gna, her messenger, who rode through the sky on the horse Hofvarpnir. These attendants may be personified aspects of Frigga; the mythology is not clear on that point.

In Scandinavia, the stars known as Orion's Belt are called Friggarock, or Frigga's distaff. The distaff, together with the spindle and keys, are Frigga's symbols.

Frigga and Odin's son, Balder, was the god of light and peace. Frigga attempted to prevent Balder's death by extracting oaths from every object in nature not to harm him, but she forgot the mistletoe, which the mischievous god Loki used to kill him.

As queen of the gods, Frigga was clever about getting her own way. One myth tells of two warring tribes of mortals, the Vandals, who were favored by Odin, and the Winnilers, whom Frigga favored. Odin and Frigga argued heatedly over their choices. Finally, Odin swore that he would grant victory to the tribe he saw first upon waking.

Since Odin's bed faced the Vandal camp, the bet seemed a sure thing. But Frigga appeared to the Winniler women and told them to disguise themselves as men, using their long hair to make fake beards, and to turn Odin's bed around. When he woke up, Odin was surprised to see so many long-bearded men. He called them Langobards (long beards), or Lombards. The Winnilers took that new name, and Odin was forced to grant them the victory.

See also: Mother Goddess/Earth Mother; Norse Mythology; Odin/Odhinn.

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Frogs and Toads

Frogs and toads undergo an amazing transformation as they develop from tadpole to adult. Many types also shed their skin as they grow, some even eating the shed skins. These intriguing creatures have played major roles in the myths and folktales of many world cultures, often as symbols of fertility and renewal.

In ancient Egypt, the reason for such veneration may be that frogs thrived after the annual flooding of the Nile River. The hieroglyph for the number 100,000 is a frog. Frogs were often mummified, and frog figures were placed in temples. A frog was the symbol of the goddess Heqit, who ruled conception and birth, and Egyptian women often wore amulets in the form of frogs.

Tlaltecuhti, the mother goddess of the Aztec people of Mesoamerica, was portrayed as a toad or a half-human, half-toad hybrid. The Olmec people, also Mesoamerican, portrayed a toad-god of rebirth, which was pictured eating its shed skin.

In Western culture, the frog as a symbol of transformation appears in the "The Frog Prince." In this folktale, a prince is turned into a frog and is rescued when he is kissed by a princess.

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Frogs and the Rain

In folk belief, frogs often are associated with storms and rain. In India, for instance, frogs were believed to echo the thunder, and the word *frog* in ancient Sanskrit means "cloud." In Mesoamerica, frogs and toads were thought to be spirits of rain and were included in rituals to encourage precipitation. The Aymara people of Bolivia and Peru placed small images of frogs on hilltops to call the rain. If the rains did not come, the images might be beaten for their perceived failure. Some Australian aborigines also believed that frogs summoned rain.

Many traditions, including those found in the United States's Appalachian Mountains, hold that if you kill a frog, a downpour will follow. It was even believed that frogs fell with the rain.

Frogs and Toads in the Middle Ages

Not all cultures saw frogs and toads as beneficial. In much of medieval Europe, for instance, toads were said to be evil creatures with poisonous blood. Some of these ideas came from Greek and Roman writers, such as Pliny the Elder, who claimed that toads had many strange powers. Pliny also wrote that a bone from a toad would keep water from boiling or dogs from attacking.

It also was believed that there was a magical jewel within the head of a toad, called a toadstone. When this stone was placed in a ring or a necklace, it would heat up or change color in the presence of poison.

In medieval Europe, toads often were pictured as imps that aided witches in evil deeds. There were even cases of toads being put on trial, convicted, and burned at the stake for witchcraft. Toads also were used to represent romantic jealousy.

Asian Beliefs

The ancient Chinese saw the toad as a female force, or yin. In Chinese and Burmese lore, a frog or toad caused lunar eclipses by swallowing the moon.

In many Chinese folktales, the toad was a trickster, or even a magician, that knew the secret of immortality. One such tale is of the wise man Liu Hai and the three-legged toad Ch'an Chu. The Japanese version of this tale features the wise man Kosensei, who learned the powers of herbs, including the secret of immortality, from his toad friend.

Superstitions

There are many superstitions concerning frogs and toads, some of which are still believed.

In England and North America, a person can supposedly tell what type of year it will be by the behavior of the first frog seen in spring. If the frog is on dry land, the number of tears that will be shed that year is equal to the number of minutes or seconds it takes before the frog jumps into the water and swims off.

In another belief, a frog resting on dry land is bad luck if it jumps directly into the water. But if the same frog jumps away from the water and toward the observer, it means the observer will have many friends.

Some people also still believe that touching a frog or toad causes warts, and that rubbing a frog or toad over these growths can cure them.

Other superstitions related to frogs and toads are listed below.

- The dried body of a frog worn in a silk bag around the neck is said to keep off epilepsy.
- A frog brings good luck to any house that it enters.
- If a frog croaks at midnight on a battlefield, a battle will follow within three days.
- If a person swallows a tadpole while drinking from a spring, the tadpole will develop into a frog in the person's stomach.

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In stories such as that of the princess and the enchanted frog prince, a frog or toad represents transformation, since he undergoes metamorphosis to become an adult. This early twentieth-century porcelain figure was created by Ida Schwetz-Lehman. *(Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)*

- It is very unlucky to kill a toad.
- You will stub your toe and stumble if you kill a toad.
- If you kill a toad, your cows will go dry.
- If you kill a toad or a frog, the milk from your cows will be bloody.

These are only some of the many worldwide beliefs about the frog and the toad, small animals whose legendary powers in many cultures are wide-ranging and great.

See also: Heqat/Hekat/Heket.

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Fur-Bearing Trout

(North American)

The fur-bearing trout is supposed to live in the icy waters of the American West. Also known as the furry trout or the beaver trout, the fur-bearing trout is said to have grown this thick coat to insulate itself from the cold rivers of Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, and parts of Canada. Sightings also have been reported in Vermont. This amazing fish is said to grow a thick coat of snow-white fur in the winter, which it sheds during the warmer months.

There are several theories about how this strange fish came to be. One theory claims simple evolution—"survival of the furriest."

Another, more complex explanation is that the fur-bearing trout was first encountered by Scottish settlers in Canada in the seventeenth century. A letter from one of these settlers commented on the abundance of "furred animals and fish," a possible reference to the fur-bearing trout. The story goes on to say that the settler sent a fur-bearing trout back to Scotland. If this ever did happen, there is no evidence of it.

Another account involves the Arkansas River in Colorado. In the 1870s, the river ran through a gold-mining town that had an unusually large percentage of bald miners. This caught the attention of a quick-thinking hair-tonic salesman from Kentucky, who promptly headed for the camp with four bottles of his potion for sale. But he slipped on the edge of a trout stream, and two bottles of the hair tonic fell and broke in the water.

Soon afterward, fur-bearing trout began to appear. For a while, fishermen caught these trout by pretending to be barbers, setting up their red-and-white barber poles on

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the riverbanks. Fur-bearing trout wanting their fur trimmed would leap right into the arms of the fishermen.

Stuffed and mounted fur-bearing trout often can be seen on the walls of curio stores and in photographs and postcards from the mid-twentieth century. The fur-bearing trout even made an appearance, or at least had its story told, in the 2001 French film *Brotherhood of the Wolf.*

See also: Tall Tales.

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Gambling

Every human culture has some form of gambling, and therefore gambling superstitions and folk beliefs are found worldwide.

In casinos, male players believe that a beautiful woman brings good luck to the gambler she stands beside, but a dog of either gender in a casino brings bad luck. Money borrowed for gambling will always bring good luck—but it must never be lent to a gambling opponent. A first-time player always will win, with beginner's luck.

When playing cards, a player may decide to sit out a hand to "change" the cards, or ensure luck. A dealer who, because of the laws of averages, seems to be dealing more winners is considered lucky.

When using dice, the player must never allow them to fall onto the floor. If they do, the next roll will surely be an unlucky seven. But that jinx can be broken if the person who dropped the dice picks them up. If the thrown dice hit someone's hand, it means bad luck, and fresh dice must be used. A virgin shooter is someone who has never thrown dice before. Female virgin shooters are considered good luck, but male virgins are bad luck.

It is considered a sure sign of bad luck for someone to throw money on the table while the dice are rolling. The table and dice need to be "warmed up" by handling before they can be lucky enough for players. When a group of players starts losing regularly at a table, it means that the table is going bad, or losing its luck, and another table must be picked.

Clothing is also important. Some players believe in wearing old clothes or a particular outfit at every gambling session. Others prefer to wear only brand-new clothes each time to ensure fresh luck. A great variety of good luck amulets, including rabbits' feet, four-leaf clovers, coins, and religious charms, often are carried by gamblers.

Gambling themes appear in fiction and music. The nineteenth-century Russian author Aleksandr Pushkin wrote a story called *Pikovaya Dama,* or *The Queen of Spades,* which Russian composer Pyotr Ilich Tchaikovsky turned into an opera. The basic story is of a young officer's obsession with gambling and a secret formula for always winning at cards. It leads him to kill an old woman and lose the woman he loves. At last, he is driven to his death by his obsession.

A far less threatening story is found in the 1950 musical comedy *Guys and Dolls,* based loosely on the stories of Damon Runyan. This story of gamblers meeting up with members of the Salvation Army ends happily.

See also: Motifs.

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Gamelan

(Indonesian)

The word *gamelan* means "musical group" and may come from a Javanese word that means to strike a percussion instrument. The term *gamelan* also refers collectively to one of more than twenty different kinds of percussion ensembles and, by extension, to the people who play in them. Gamelan music often is used as an accompaniment to story recitations and performances.

Gamelan music is indigenous to the Indonesian island of Java and dates back thousands of years. One myth states that the gods created the first gamelan musician, named Lokananta. Gamelan music is an essential part of all cultural activities in Java, including *wayang kulit,* or shadow puppet performances, court dance, and *uyon-uyon,* or symphony orchestra performances.

A complete gamelan ensemble must include the *kendang,* a double-ended drum beaten with the hands. This is a major instrument, and the *pengendang,* or drummer, is the conductor of the gamelan orchestra. Other instruments are the *saron,* a form of glockenspiel played with a mallet; the *boning barung,* a double row of bronze kettles on a horizontal frame played with two long drumsticks; the *slentem* and the *gender,* both made up of thin bronze bars over bamboo resonance chambers, each played with a padded drumstick; the *gambang,* made up of wooden bars on a wooden frame played with drumsticks of buffalo horn; and a variety of gongs.

The largest gong is considered to be the spiritual center of the gamelan. There are also a variety of xylophones, ranging from the smallest, *gangsas,* to the medium-sized *ugal,* to the largest, the *jegogan.* In addition, a gamelan contains stringed instruments, such as the *clempung* and the *rebab,* and large drums such as the *bedug.* There also may be vocalists, male or female, known as *pesindens.*

During a performance, all gamelan players sit cross-legged on a mat. In the *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet) show, which lasts an entire night, a gamelan plays a specific set of music that changes every three hours. The texture of a performance depends on the size of the instruments. The small instruments have more elaborate parts than the large ones. The largest gong, for example, is played only once per piece.

Even though Western instruments and music have become well known in Indonesia, the gamelan remains a popular form of music making.

See also: Wayang.

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Gargoyles

Gargoyles originally were waterspouts that were designed to direct falling rain away from an exterior wall of a building. Over time, these architectural features became elaborate carvings of human and animal forms. The origins of these figures can be traced to ancient Egyptian temples. During the Middle Ages, storytellers invented fantastic stories to explain their beginnings.

Gargoyles can be categorized by shape—human gargoyles, animal gargoyles, and hybrid forms. Medieval gargoyles took on increasingly grotesque shapes, as artisans created distorted faces of men or the entire bodies of weird animals and human-animal oddities. Gargoyles are featured on churches as well as secular buildings, and they are still included in modern architecture. In New York City, for example, gargoyles are featured on nineteenth-century townhouses and twentieth-century skyscrapers.

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Monstrous or satiric gargoyles can be found on many buildings throughout the world. They date from the Middle Ages to modern times—from this example found on the west facade of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, France, to gargoyles on New York City's Art Deco–style Chrysler Building. *(© Archive Timothy McCarthy/Art Resource, NY)*

One of the most fantastic stories invented to explain the origin of gargoyles comes from medieval France. A dragon called La Gargouille was attacking ships on the Seine, causing floods. Every year, the people of the city of Rouen offered La Gargouille a human victim for him to devour, but this sacrifice failed to calm the dragon. Then, sometime in the year 600 C.E., a priest named Romanus swore that if the people of Rouen built a church, he would rid them of the dragon. The priest triumphed over the dragon, although the story fails to say how. La Gargouille's monstrous head and neck were mounted on the town wall, inspiring generations of gargoyles to come.

Less fantastic theories state that the gargoyle is meant to ward off evil or to warn the faithful against evil. Some gargoyles are parodies of specific people, carved either in good-natured mockery or as retribution for a slight or failure to pay the stone carver.

A new surge of folklore has sprung up around the image of the gargoyle, due in part to an animated television series called *Gargoyles,* which aired from 1994 to 1997. The series featured a living race of gargoyles that came to life at night and fought crime. Soon after this series debuted, new beliefs about gargoyles began to surface.

Although these are clearly based on the series, not on any earlier folk beliefs, many people do seem to have accepted these twentieth-century images as genuine folklore. It is believed by many that gargoyles can come to life at night and protect sleeping humans, can scare off evil creatures, and can return to stone at sunrise. Believers also think that such gargoyles with wings can fly.

Whether these recent beliefs will continue to survive without the influence of the television series or modern-day views of gargoyles will revert to the less dramatic medieval folk beliefs remains to be seen.

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See also: Motifs.

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Garm

(Norse)

In Norse mythology, the monstrous hound Garm was the servant of the goddess Hel and guarded the entrance to Helheim, the realm of the dead. Garm had four eyes and a chest drenched with blood. The monster hound lived in the Gnipa cave, near the entrance to Helheim. Anyone who had given bread to the poor in life could appease Garm's anger with a special treat called Hel cake.

On the day of Ragnarok, the final battle, it was believed that Garm would join the giants in their fight against the gods. In one version of the story, Tyr, the god of war, killed the hound but died from the wounds that Garm had inflicted.

Garm is often equated with the monstrous wolf and savage enemy of the gods Fenrir. In most versions of the story of Ragnarok, it is Fenrir, not Garm, who slays and is slain by Tyr.

See also: Dogs; Norse Mythology.

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Garuda

(Indian)

Garuda, which probably originated in Buddhist India, was said to be an enormous bird of prey with a golden body and bright red wings that were broad enough to blot out the Sun.

Garuda was fond of killing and eating snakes and did so every day, until he was taught the value of self-control by a Buddhist prince. Once he mastered the art of self-discipline, Garuda brought to life all of the serpents he had eaten in the past.

Called the Bird of Life in Hinduism, Garuda carried the great Hindu god Vishnu through the heavens. According to the great Hindu epic *Mahabharata,* Garuda had permission from Vishnu to devour bad men. The bird was also the enemy of the Nagas, the serpent people. Today, Garuda is depicted as having a human torso, arms, and legs.

The enormous Garuda, called the Bird of Life, carried the great Hindu god Vishnu through the heavens. According to the Hindu epic *Mahabharata*, Garuda had permission to devour bad men. The bird also was the enemy of the Nagas, the serpent people. *(Tim Graham/Getty Images)*

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In Thai mythology, Garuda is called the king of birds, and the image of Garuda tearing a Naga in two is the symbol of the Thai monarchy. In Indonesia, Garuda's name is used by the national airline, Garuda International.

See also: *Mahabharata.*

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Geb

(Egyptian)

Geb is the ancient Egyptian earth god. He was the son of the air god Shu and the goddess Tefnut.

Geb was described as lying beneath the feet of his father while forever lifting his sister, the sky goddess, Nut, above his head. Artistic representations usually show Geb in this position with an erect phallus, signaling the fertility of the earth. He was the third mythic king of Egypt, after the sun god, Re, and the god of the air, Shu.

The body of Geb was the earth itself. Crops grew on his back or from his ribs, and the bodies of the deceased entered Geb. As the earth, and therefore one who nourished the living, including deities, Geb was called the *ka,* meaning "soul," or "vital force," of the other gods.

From the union of Geb and Nut came the gods Osiris and Seth and their sister-consorts, Isis and Nephthys. Geb appointed Osiris ruler of Egypt, which, after Osiris's death, led Seth to battle Osiris's son Horus for the crown.

According to a text known as the Memphite Theology (c. 800–700 B.C.E.), Geb divided the country into Upper and Lower Egypt and granted Lower Egypt, or the delta, to Horus and the rest to Seth. He quickly changed his mind and awarded the entire land to Horus. In the tale *The Contendings of Horus and Seth,* Geb acted as arbitrator between the two rivals. He played the same role with the human kingship, setting the new royal successor in the place of the late king. The kingship is sometimes referred to as "the throne of Geb."

In some Greco-Roman texts, Geb's attributes are assigned to the creator god, Khnum.

Noreen Doyle

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German Storytelling

There is not much written evidence about the kinds of stories that were told in Germany by ordinary people before the nineteenth century. There is evidence of a rich, centuries-old oral tradition in Germany in medieval epics such as the *Nibelungenlied,* but those were traditionally the entertainment of nobility, not the common folk.

Storytelling always has been considered a minor art in Germany, performed casually in private and informal spaces. Traveling craftsmen, merchants, or soldiers would carry a mixture of folktales, anecdotes, and real news from place to place. These stories were retold by villagers on long winter nights, as families and even whole villages took care of chores such as spinning or mending fishing nets.

The Nineteenth Century

In the early nineteenth century, Germany went through an identity crisis. German artists and scientists frantically searched for their roots. This generation glorified the last universal culture to precede the Enlightenment—the Middle Ages.

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Out of this came Romanticism. Folktales and folk songs were rediscovered. They were sometimes redesigned according to the collectors' ideas on what constituted true, original folklore. The stories are split into four categories: *Zaubermärchen* (wonder tales), *Schwänke* (comical tales), *Sagen* (local legends), and *Legenden* (saints' legends).

The Brothers Grimm

The most famous folktale collectors were Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. Linguists by profession, they felt obliged to preserve and publish folktales. The seven editions of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen,* or *Children's and Household Tales,* were published between 1812 and 1857. These successful collections may have prevented some traditional stories from vanishing. This work has been published in more translations and editions all over the world than any other German book.

The publication of the Grimms' tales marked a change in public perception of folktales. Once thought of as told tales, these were now primarily known as written works. The Grimm brothers also eliminated what they considered offensive subjects and language from the stories, as these folktales were meant for children. This suited the current bourgeois Biedermeier style, which championed pedagogic literature.

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm claimed to have written the stories down just as they had heard them, as one edition's introduction states, "without adding, glossing or changing anything." Literary studies have since proved that they did indeed make changes.

Their story sources were also limited. Among these sources were individuals with Huguenot backgrounds, which explains the presence of some nearly unchanged tales of the French poet Charles Perrault, such as "Little Red Riding Hood."

Loss of the Storytelling Tradition

The influence of the work that became known simply as Grimm's Fairy Tales was so strong that it defined the idea of what a folktale should sound like. The public's fascination with this style remained unchallenged throughout the following decades.

The rising popularity of mass media and the ongoing change of social structures further weakened traditional storytelling by everyday people. By the late 1960s, young people knew very little traditional lore, and even older generations referred to books as primary sources for these stories.

In the late 1960s, social and cultural ideologies changed throughout the Western world. In the former West Germany, this nearly put an end to traditional stories, even in their printed form. These stories were blamed for the perpetuation of conservative and outdated values. Only a few alternative theaters, called *freie Theatre,* embraced storytelling with programs of stories and improvisation. But their efforts fell short of launching a true storytelling revival.

East Germany followed a different path. In socialism, folktales were considered a genuine expression of the ordinary people's longing for justice, happiness, and peace. As a result, socialist cultural institutions tried to bring folktales to the modern audience. The government supported the use of traditional tales as source material for movies, plays, and radio productions.

As a reaction against the ever-decreasing importance of traditional stories in West Germany, the Gesellschaft zur Pflege des Märchengutes europäischer Völker (Association for the Care of Fairytales of European Cultures) was founded in 1956. It was later renamed the Europäische Märchengesellschaft (European Fairytale Association), or the EMG. The word *European* in the name refers to the range of tales, rather than to the association members, since nearly all members are German speakers. The main interest of the organization is the academic study of wonder tales in both literary and psychological contexts.

The monopoly of Grimm's Fairy Tales and printed sources in general had extended so far that nearly all tellers recited stories verbatim, which made the storyteller's performance

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recitation rather than telling. There was little room for improvisation, which shifted the telling into a kind of lecture. The tellers following this fashion called themselves *Märchenerzähler* (fairy tale teller) instead of *Geschichtenerzähler* (storyteller).

From the second half of the 1980s, several developments unfolded simultaneously. The fairy tale movement of the EMG members spread into regional culture as *Märchenkreise* (fairy tale circles), where folktale enthusiasts could gather. In some of these circles, the frame of topics has come to include local legends.

In addition, immigrants, mainly from Arab countries, recently have introduced their idea of storytelling to Germany. But their contributions are generally considered exotic and remain on the fringes of German culture.

In the last years of the twentieth century, a rising esoteric movement created a storytelling school of its own. Its followers started up *Märchenzentren,* or fairy tale centers, all over the country. These centers deal exclusively with wonder or comic tales, and the performances combine fairy tales with puppetry, dance, and meditation.

The Future of Storytelling

In recent years, increasing contact between storytellers has led to a discussion about the future of storytelling, about aesthetics and questions of style. Exchanges with storytellers from abroad have helped to fertilize this process and open new horizons. The German word for storyteller, Geschichtenerzähler, is used more frequently. More and more tellers are telling rather than reciting, and they embrace stories completely invented by the teller as well as epics, myths, biographies, and world literature.

Storytelling as a cultural activity became more popular in the 1990s, when the first festivals of storytelling were launched in Berlin, Remscheid, and Aachen. Yet the existence of storytelling as a performing art is still unknown to the majority of Germans. The increase in fairy tale book and audio book editions in Germany is evidence of what may be an unconscious longing for traditional story structures and intimate listening experiences.

In Germany as in other countries, storytelling and its protagonists continue to strive to find a place in twenty-first-century society. Its proponents hope that this ancient art form will find such a place before, as a storyteller might say, "our beards have grown long."

See also: Brothers Grimm; *Retelling: The Twelve Dancing Princesses.*

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Gesta Danorum

(Danish)

The *Gesta Danorum,* or *Story of the Danes,* is a history of Denmark written in Latin by Saxo Grammaticus in the twelfth century. The work contains both fantasy and fact and includes many tales of interest to storytellers.

Little is known about the author other than that he seems to have had a full academic education. He was commissioned to write this work at the end of the twelfth century by the archbishop of Lund.

The *Gesta Danorum* is divided into sixteen books. The first nine deal with the Nordic gods and heroes. Also contained in this work is the story of Prince Amled, who was the inspiration for William Shakespeare's *Hamlet.*

The second half of the work covers Danish history up to the author's time during the reign of King Canute VI. The main purpose of the work was to praise the Danish nation and its line of kings, although it does not seem to have been widely known outside of Denmark until fairly recently.

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See also: Epics.

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Ghost Stories, College

Legends about supernatural entities and inexplicable events are widespread on college campuses across America.

Frequently told by upperclassmen to entering freshmen, these stories serve as a form of initiation. As freshmen adjust to the demands of college classes and social life, they hear ghost stories about victims of murder and suicide, casualties of war, and persecution of minority group members, including African American slaves and Native Americans.

These stories of sudden death and other tragedies may be compared to ghost stories told by camp counselors to young campers. In both camp and college, young people must learn to cope with the stress of a new way of life in an unfamiliar environment. In college, students gain a broader sense of historical and psychological horrors, and ghost stories provide an outlet to express them.

The college ghost story owes some of its features to nineteenth-century literary ghost stories and gothic novels. Haunted residence halls resemble haunted mansions, with long corridors leading to forbidden rooms and specters appearing in mirrors.

At Oxford and Cambridge universities in England, the residential colleges take pride in their ghosts, which often are related to historical events. The history of American college ghosts covers a shorter period of time but includes a number of colorful figures.

American Ghosts

A long-standing tradition at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, involves a ghost named Dooley. This ghost has represented student spirit at Emory since 1899. Dooley's Week is celebrated each spring, and the ghost, represented by an anonymous student dressed as a skeleton, may disband classes by threatening to shoot professors with his water pistol.

At Huntington College in Montgomery, Alabama, the Red Lady haunts Pratt Hall. She is said to have been a homesick student who slit her wrists while dressed in a red robe, covered by a red blanket.

Numerous other college ghost stories tell of women who committed suicide. Sarah, at Mansfield University in Mansfield, Pennsylvania, threw herself down a long flight of stairs after being rejected by her boyfriend; Edith, at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, was a resident assistant who killed herself because the students were so unkind to her; and Isabella, at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, Louisiana, lost her boyfriend and stabbed herself after becoming a nun.

Another ghost wearing a nun's habit is the Faceless Nun of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College in Terre Haute, Indiana. She glides through the hall where she used to teach art. The ghost of the C.C. White Building at Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln also is said to have been a faculty member, Clara Urania Mills. In 1963, a secretary in the building saw the ghost of a woman in old-fashioned clothing, and when she looked out a window, she saw a scene from the past.

Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, reputed to be one of the most haunted places in the United States, is said to be haunted by Confederate soldiers. In addition to being seen pacing back and forth as if on duty, the ghostly soldiers knock posters off the walls of students' rooms.

Specters

Locally known college ghosts include specters that appear in elevators, bathrooms, hallways, basements, and mirrors. On some campuses, including Binghamton University in New York, there have been reports of Native American ghosts standing silently near buildings. Other colleges, including Mount Saint Mary's in

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Emmitsburg, Maryland, retain stories of the ghosts of slaves who suffered at the hands of their owners.

Avery F. Gordon explains in *Ghostly Matters* (1997) that many of these stories of spectral visitors serve to remind us of events in the past that should not be forgotten.

Elizabeth Tucker

See also: Ghosts and Hauntings.

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Ghosts, Aviation

There are a number of supernatural stories related to the field of aviation.

Ghost planes have been spotted in England. In 1997, a group out comet watching in Sheffield, an area where numerous planes had crashed during World War II, reported that a propeller plane flew low over their heads and crashed nearby, but searchers found nothing. In 2004, about thirty eyewitnesses claimed they saw a ghostly Lancaster bomber move silently across the sky and disappear.

Also in England, the last Avro Lincoln bomber in existence is located in the Cosford Aerospace Museum. The airplane is said to be haunted by a ghostly pilot in the cockpit. In England's North East Aircraft Museum, a helicopter once used for search and rescue is said to be haunted by passengers who died en route, and a ghostly soldier wearing a Royal Air Force uniform has been seen by and spoken to visitors in hangar one. In Missouri, a pilot is said to haunt a former U.S. Army helicopter; a similar story of a haunted airplane is told in Ohio.

There are other stories of aircraft, airports, and aviation hangars being haunted by ghosts. In Texas, a hanger in an abandoned World War II military base is said to be haunted by a man who hung himself from the rafters. He has been seen peering out the broken windows of the old building. Other stories report pilots and passengers haunting sites where they died in aircraft crashes.

Flight 401

The most detailed and well-documented aviation ghost story is related to the crash of an Eastern Airlines Lockheed 1011 on December 29, 1972. Flight 401 quickly became the source of rumors throughout the airline industry. Flight attendants and pilots on other planes told of "seeing" the images of the dead crew members. They witnessed a face in the window of a galley oven or a ghost sitting in the passenger cabin in uniform. Occasionally, these specters were even witnessed performing crew duties.

The main cause of the plane crash was the inadvertent disconnection of the automatic pilot control. This caused the aircraft to gradually descend while the pilots were preoccupied with what turned out to be a minor maintenance problem. Traveling at night over the Florida Everglades, there were no visual clues to give the pilots enough warning to pull up prior to impact. One hundred people perished, including two of the three pilots: Captain Bob Loft and Second Officer Don Repo.

Though many perished, the aircraft was not totally destroyed. Following the investigation, many of the plane's salvageable parts were placed on new Lockheed TriStar aircraft or in Eastern Airlines' spare parts inventory. Eastern Airlines aircraft number N318EA received the majority of these reused parts. This airplane gained the reputation as the "ghost plane" where most of the paranormal sightings took place. Traditionally, spirits are drawn to

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inanimate objects that have a strong connection to their lives in the physical world. Captain Loft seemed to favor sitting quietly in the first-class cabin, disappearing when confronted.

Some people speculate that the ghosts of Loft and Repo were unable to pass on to the next life, because they felt responsible for the deaths of the passengers. There are many accounts of the ghost of Repo being preoccupied with the safety of Eastern's Lockheed 1011s, particularly aircraft N318EA. In one instance, the apparition of Repo told a captain that he would never let another crash happen.

This ghost story that circulated in hushed voices among international flight crews for years was brought to the public's awareness first by John G. Fuller's book *The Ghost of Flight 401* (1976), and then later by a television movie starring Ernest Borgnine as Don Repo. Singer Bob Welch of the band Fleetwood Mac wrote a song about the tragedy called "The Ghost of Flight 401."

Byron Tetrick

See also: Ghosts and Hauntings.

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Ghosts: A Sampling of Stories

Storytellers are familiar with traditional ghost stories and hauntings that take place in American and English locations. There are also many examples from around the world. Here are a few.

Norway

The Draugen is the ghost of a dead fisherman who did not receive a Christian burial. He sails in a half-boat with shredded sails. Anyone who sees him suffers death by drowning.

Czech Republic

Hans Hagen is the ghost of a German soldier or secret service agent from World War II. He is said to haunt the so-called Amerika quarry and the surrounding caves near Prague. He murders or imprisons intruders by causing parts of the caves to collapse.

There is also said to be a stalactite that can be struck like a bell. Anyone foolish enough to hit it and say, "Hagen, take me!" will die within a year.

Judeo-Christian Tradition

The *Book of Enoch,* which was written between the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, describes evil spirits that wander the world endlessly yearning for food and drink, even though they have no mouths. They seek to possess the spirits and bodies of weak-willed men and women.

India

In Hindu belief, *pisachas,* also known as *vetala,* are hostile spirits of the dead whose children did not perform the necessary funerary rites in their memory. These spirits haunt cemeteries and ruins, and they can drive people mad, kill children, and cause miscarriages.

Thailand

Mae Nak was a beautiful young woman who married a man named Tid Mak. While she was pregnant with their first child, Tid Mak was called to join the army in northern Thailand. When he returned, Tid Mak found his family waiting for him. When he embraced his wife, Tid Mak was shocked at how cold Mae Nak's body felt, but he thought nothing of it.

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When the family sat down to dinner, a sudden gust of cold wind made Tid Mak drop his spoon. Mae Nak lengthened her hand to catch it. Tid Mak asked her about this action, and she cried out and told him that she had died. Only then did Tid Mak realize that his wife and child were ghosts.

Indonesia

A *pontianak* is the spirit of a woman who died in childbirth and comes back to seek revenge against the living. She sometimes appears in the form of a beautiful woman, but also materializes as a head and neck with dangling intestines. The pontianak takes this hideous shape when she wants to feed and kill.

The only way to stop the pontianak is to plunge a nail into the back of her neck. This traps her in human form so she can be killed.

Japan

There are many Japanese ghost stories. One example is the story of Okiku, who worked as a maid at the home of the samurai Tessan Aoyama. One day while cleaning a collection of ten precious ceramic plates, Okiku accidentally broke one of them. The outraged Tessan Aoyama killed Okiku and threw her corpse into an old well.

Every night afterward, Okiku's ghost rose from the well, counted slowly to nine, and broke into heartrending sobs, tormenting the samurai. Finally, vengeance was wrought when Tessan Aoyama went insane.

In an alternate version, the samurai wished Okiku to become his mistress and falsely accused her of breaking a plate so that he could offer forgiveness in exchange for her love. When she refused, he killed her.

Native American

In Blackfoot mythology, the *stau-au* are the ghosts of wicked people. Usually, the deceased live in a certain range of hills, but malignant spirits loiter near encampments. They cause harm to the living, especially after sunset.

This sampling of ghost tales reflects the universality of the genre and the rich international sources available to the storyteller.

See also: Ghosts and Hauntings.

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Ghosts and Hauntings

A ghost is the spirit of a person who has died, a spirit that, for some reason, remains here on Earth. A few distinctive characteristics are common to all ghosts. They are noncorporeal and, as such, are not subject to normal physical laws. Ghosts rarely appear in daylight and generally are restricted in their movements. Many are confined to a specific place, which they are said to haunt.

This definition holds whether or not one believes in the existence of ghosts. The idea that ghosts exist and that they are the spirits of the dead is pervasive throughout societies from around the world. The ancient Babylonians, Native Americans, Africans, Pacific Islanders, and Australian Aborigines all have a traditional belief in ghosts. All of these cultures agree that ghosts are indeed the spirits of the dead.

Belief in ghosts is often tied to religious beliefs. In Christian beliefs, the souls of people

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who have died are supposed to go to heaven, hell, or purgatory, or at least to rest until Judgment Day. Spirits that do not follow the usual path are believed to haunt the earth.

Why Ghosts Exist

Explanations of why a spirit stays behind usually are related to the manner in which the person died or to something that affects those who were near and dear to the deceased. Ghosts often seek revenge, sometimes against whoever caused their death.

Some ghosts are believed to have unfinished business on Earth. They might remain on Earth to protect a family member or other loved one from disaster. One such ghost is the spirit of an early trapper that haunts U.S. Highway 23 near Gate City, Virginia. After the trapper was killed in a Shawnee ambush, his ghost warned white and Cherokee travelers of the presence of Shawnee raiders. In more modern times, he is said to appear to warn drivers about icy conditions on the highway.

This nineteenth-century illustration depicts a horrified family in the midst of poltergeist activity. While modern science does not accept the existence of ghosts, there is no proof that they do not exist. *(Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images)*

Railroad Ghosts

Another explanation for the presence of ghosts is that they have remained to make amends. A classic example of this is in Brunswick County, North Carolina. A mysterious light, known as the Maco light, has been seen by many witnesses along the railroad tracks.

This light is supposed to be the lantern belonging to Joe Baldwin, a conductor who was riding on the last car of a train on a night in 1867. The car accidentally uncoupled from the rest of the train. Knowing another train was coming, Baldwin stood on the back platform and waved his lantern frantically, but the engineer of the oncoming train did not see it in time. There was a collision, and Baldwin was killed. His lantern survived unscathed.

The presence of the ghostly Maco light is explained as Baldwin attempting to prevent the collision. Another theory is that it is the ghost of the engineer of the oncoming train, who remains on Earth to pay for his lack of attentiveness.

Other mysterious lights are commonly seen along railroad tracks. Notable accounts are found in Chapel Hill, Tennessee, and in Gurdon, Arizona. In both cases, the lights are said to have originated when a railway worker was killed and decapitated by a train. Neither man's head was ever found, possibly because of the extreme force of the massive weight of the locomotive. At both locations, the light is said to be a lantern carried by a ghost who is, like the famous ghost in Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1820), searching for his missing head.

Haunted Residences

Some ghosts lay claim to a house and attempt to drive intruders away. The ghosts that purportedly inhabit Bobby Mackey's Music World, a nightclub located on the bank of the Licking

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River in Wilder, Kentucky, have been said to tell people to "get out."

The building that is now occupied by the nightclub has served various purposes. Beginning as a slaughterhouse, it was reportedly used as a disposal site in the 1896 murder of Pearl Bryan. Her nude and headless body was found nearby. Bryan, who was pregnant by the son of a notable minister, had been decapitated by means of dental tools, which meant her death was protracted and agonizing. Her head was never found.

The building became a nightclub in the 1920s, and subsequently was the scene of numerous shootings and of a particularly notable murder and suicide. Johanna, the daughter of the man who owned the club at the time, was impregnated by a singer who worked there. Johanna's outraged father used his gangland connections to have the singer murdered, and Johanna subsequently committed suicide. She was reputed to have worn rose-scented perfume. That scent and songs from the 1930s and 1940s playing on jukeboxes that are not turned on are cited as evidence of the haunting. Bobby Mackey's wife claims she was ordered out of the place when she was five months pregnant—exactly as far along in her pregnancy as both Pearl and Johanna had been.

The famous haunted house in Amityville, New York, which inspired the movie *The Amityville Horror* (1979; remade in 2005), also may fall into this category. But there are so many conflicting claims about this supposed haunting, the truth of the matter is difficult to discern.

Other Explanations

In non-Christian cultures, different reasons for hauntings are sometimes given. Some Native American tribes, the Pawnee and Wichita in particular, believe that the soul of a person who was scalped could not rest unless certain specific rituals were performed. If the tribe neglected to perform the rituals, then the ghost of that person would remain. These ghosts could be very troublesome to the tribe.

In many cases a ghost, while seeming to act intelligently and to have motivations of its own, does not appear to have any particular goal in mind. The supposed ghosts of the various queens put to death by England's King Henry VIII and other unfortunate victims of politics—Anne Boleyn, Lady Jane Grey, and others—have been the subject of sightings by hundreds of people. But, judging by the contents of the reports, these apparitions are not particularly active and do not seem to want anything in particular. They simply wander aimlessly.

Recently, there was a similar ghost in California. This ghost supposedly communicated with, became friends with, and even acted as mentor and advisor to the teenagers who lived in the house she haunted. According to this ghost, she did not know why she had not "passed on" to the next life. She "woke" after her death and did not realize she had died. So she simply returned to the house where she had formerly lived.

Ghosts and Science

The definition of *haunted* extends beyond the concept of the ghost. A haunted place is one where things happen that do not seem to have any natural explanation. Modern science does not accept the existence of ghosts or haunts and holds that these things always have a natural explanation. It is just that the explanation is not known to the observer.

The problem for scientists is that there is no proof that ghosts do *not* exist. There is no coherent and testable hypothesis concerning the nature of a ghost. The existence—or nonexistence—of a disembodied spirit of a dead person cannot be confirmed in any way.

Many have attempted to confirm the existence of these spirits. Escape artist Harry Houdini spent much of his life trying to communicate with the spirit of his mother through mediums. Houdini and his wife Bess made a pact that whoever died first would try to communicate with the living spouse. The couple created a ten-word code, known only to

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the two of them, which could be used to verify the communication. After Houdini's death in 1926, Bess offered a reward of $10,000 to any medium who could establish contact with her husband. For ten years, Bess tried to contact his spirit. Although most of the mediums claimed success, none of them was ever able to produce the ten-word code.

Spirits and Poltergeists

In essentially every culture where the concept of the ghost is current, there is—or at least was, at some point in the past—a parallel belief in other types of spirits, such as nature spirits, angels, and so on. There are, however, no clear-cut criteria that distinguish ghosts from these other spirits, other than the belief that at least some of them are not confined to specific physical areas.

There are accounts of events that can be considered ghost stories but feature some sort of intelligence of undetermined nature other than a ghost. The so-called Bell Witch is one such story, although, despite its name, this story is not about a witch.

In 1817 in Robertson County, Tennessee, settler John Bell came across a strange animal in his cornfield, an animal he described as having a rabbit's head and a dog's body. Bell fired his rifle at the animal but was inexplicably unable to hit it, and it vanished among the corn. That same evening, he and his family believed they heard odd sounds outside their house, as if a number of people were beating on the walls with switches.

From that time on, for the rest of John Bell's life, he and his family were tormented by an entity that manifested itself in a wide variety of ways. It sometimes talked to them and was said to be able to foretell the future and give details about events that happened hundreds of miles away.

In 1819, future president Andrew Jackson visited the Bell home with a company of soldiers, determined to find out the truth about the Bell Witch. He reported odd phenomena such as a wagon refusing to move, disembodied voices being heard, and an attack on one of his soldiers by something unseen. Jackson and his entourage left hastily the next morning. Later, as president, Jackson was quoted as saying, "I'd rather fight the entire British Army than to deal with the Bell Witch."

Poltergeists, or mischievous ghosts, are not spirits. Poltergeist activity is normally manifested by moving objects, unexplained fires or floods, and other such events. This activity is distinctly linked to the presence of a disturbed adolescent. These cases are now referred to in the parapsychological literature as cases of recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis.

Hauntings or Electromagnetics?

Even though the explanation of a ghost as the spirit of a dead person remains prevalent, there is an alternate theory based on laboratory findings by the author Dr. W.G. Roll and others. These researchers believe that hauntings, and by extension ghosts, may be accompanied by disturbances in local electromagnetic fields.

These scientific studies are in their infancy, and any claims that ghosts can be reliably detected by observing the local electromagnetic field are grossly exaggerated. This research has found, however, that the presence of ghosts generally is characterized by one or more of a few fairly common and consistent observations:

- Visual sightings of a ghost, which can run from encountering an apparently solid and corporeal person to vague glimpses of shadowy or translucent figures.
- Hearing the ghost, which can range from hearing what may seem at the time to be ordinary voices to unexplained footsteps, cries or moans, rattling chains, and so on.
- Unexplained physical sensations, including the often-cited rising of body hairs, as well as the sensation of encountering cold spots in an otherwise

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warm room. Sometimes scents are said to be indicative of the presence of a ghost, as in the case of Bobby Mackey's Music World, where Johanna's rose-scented perfume commonly accompanies the phenomenon.

- Apparently inexplicable events, such as the spontaneous opening of doors.

Simple charges of static electricity can cause the rising hairs often cited in these events, and the human sensory system attempts to explain anomalous events in terms of the known senses. Very high-level magnetic fields, for example, which can be detected by human beings and other animals, often are seen and described as a purplish glow, although there is no light being generated by the magnetic source and the effect cannot be photographed.

Tens of thousands of purported ghost photographs exist, but most of these misinterpret simple and well-known phenomena. A classic example is the so-called orb photograph. This image is featured on hundreds of Internet sites and in quite a few books. Orbs may be lens refractions—an effect that is familiar to professional photographers—or photos of common objects that appear strange under the circumstances. Perhaps a moth, photographed at night and illuminated by a flash, is so close to the camera's lens that it is out of focus. Double exposures caused by the failure of a camera to properly advance the film are another frequent explanation for ghost photographs. And, of course, quite a few such photographs are deliberate fakes.

Pareidolia

Another natural explanation for ghost photographs—and for ghostly phenomena in general—lies in the psychological concept of pareidolia. This tendency to see order in random patterns lies behind many reported paranormal incidents and even such phenomena as UFOs. The Man in the Moon, faces seen in clouds, or the image of Jesus Christ seen on a tortilla are all examples of pareidolia.

Audio versions of pareidolia also occur, such as the supposed satanic lyrics that were heard when certain records were played backward and the unintelligible voices people sometimes hear behind white- or pink-noise sources, such as air conditioners. The current interest in the electronic voice phenomenon, popularized by the 2005 movie *White Noise* and claimed by some to provide proof of life after death, shows how seductive these misinterpretations can be.

Apophenia

Apophenia is closely related to pareidolia. It is the tendency humans have to see patterns or connections between events that actually are random. For example, disconnected phenomena in a house, such as an unidentified sound happening at the same time as a door sliding open, may be taken to indicate the presence of a ghost.

Sometimes, houses are moved from their original locations. This is most common in mountainous areas, where dwellings built on hillsides move as the hillside is gradually undermined by water. These buildings often become distorted by the movement, so that the angles in the rooms no longer measure 90 degrees. People subliminally perceive angles that measure slightly more or a little less than 90 degrees, and many are made uncomfortable in such distorted rooms and may describe them as spooky.

Recent experiments conducted in haunted sites in Great Britain revealed that there was consistency among observers as to which areas they felt were haunted. Other studies of haunted houses in Britain have shown that, more often than not, there are disturbances in the magnetic fields in such places. Also, the places in those houses where the occupants find they are best able to sleep tend to be those areas that have the most consistent and normal magnetic field strengths.

In support of the theory that electromagnets are associated with ghostly phenomena is the fact that so-called haunted places usually

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are castles, old houses, and so on. Such locations are considered spooky due to their state of disrepair or obvious antiquity. Places in the wilderness may be considered spooky due to their wildness, remoteness, or certain natural features. Linking an electromagnetic association with a spooky location leads the human observer to expect supernatural events.

If ghosts are indeed the result of unusual electromagnetic activity, then there is the possibility that such fields can behave in ways that could easily be interpreted as intelligent. Several scholars have put forward the idea that these fields could somehow be programmed. The most common idea is that a discharge of electromagnetic energy occurs when a person dies, especially when that person dies violently. Under certain conditions, this could remain as an organized field that might react in specific ways to the presence of another person or animal.

This speculation is based on the fact that there is constant electrical activity in the living human body. Some degree of electrical discharge must take place on the collapse of these fields when electrical death—the cessation of brain and other neural activity—occurs. This may be particularly true in instances where this cessation occurs suddenly rather than gradually, as would be the case in the violent murder of someone young and healthy.

Another possible explanation for ghosts lies in the effects of infrasound. Infrasound is defined as sound emitted at a frequency below the threshold of human hearing. Animals that have hearing thresholds lower than those of humans—such as alligators, elephants, giraffes, and whales—use infrasound to communicate. Sounds at lower frequencies can carry for many miles. Infrasound seems to evoke specific emotions in humans, in particular awe, sorrow, anxiety, fear, and even chills.

So, do ghosts exist? They very well may, but proof of their existence is elusive. The assertion that haunted places are real seems to be more certain, as there are places and structures that undeniably have strange phenomena associated with them. Only more research will provide definitive answers to these questions.

Graham Watkins

See also: Camp Stories; Campfire Storytelling; Ghost Stories, College; Ghosts, Aviation; Ghosts: A Sampling of Stories; Ghosts in Theaters.

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Ghosts in Theaters

Most traditional theaters can claim at least one ghost. The larger-than-life world of the theater, with its elements of fantasy and storytelling, is a likely reason for this. The association of ghosts with theaters also may be traced to the fact that many of these theaters are unique architectural structures with a good deal of history, and wherever there is history, there are ghosts. In the United States, there are many examples of haunted theaters.

From Coast to Coast

The Pantages Theatre in Hollywood is said to be haunted by the ghost of a female patron who died there in the first half of the twentieth century. She sometimes can be heard singing, and her voice is said to have been heard during a musical performed here in 1994. Howard Hughes's ghost also may be haunting the theater's second floor, where his office once was.

Also in Hollywood, the Palace Theater has a musical ghost that sometimes plays jazz piano when the theater is closed. There is also a female ghost who leaves behind the scent of her perfume. And on the main floor, a man with a transparent face and wearing a tuxedo is said to sit reading his paper from time to time.

Sam Warner, cofounder of the Warner Brothers film company, is said to haunt the

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Warner Pacific Theater on Hollywood Boulevard. His ghost has been seen pacing in the lobby and riding the elevator. He also is said to move furniture around in offices upstairs and to move or take, sometimes permanently, tools and electronic items.

The Little Theater in Jamestown, New York, seems to have several ghosts, although no names are given. The door to the shoe room apparently slams shut and locks on its own. A male ghost sometimes haunts the practice room and boiler room, and there have been reports of a male ghost on stage, moving props around, though not during performances.

In New York City, one particularly well-known haunted theater is the Belasco, located on West Forty-fourth Street. The theater, built by theater impresario David Belasco, first opened in 1907. Belasco loved the theater. After his death in 1931, his ghost often appeared in what had been his private box, watching the performances.

Down South

The Capital Plaza Theater in downtown Charleston, South Carolina, was built in the early 1900s on the site of what had been a mansion owned by the Welch family. There have been reports of ghostly visits by two of the Welch children: John, who likes to play tricks on the actors, and Molly, who sometimes sits in the balcony during performances. Some people have reported feeling cold drafts upon entering the theater.

The Orpheum Theater in Memphis, Tennessee, has been said to be haunted by the ghost of a young woman named Mary. It has been reported that the actor Yul Brynner once saw the ghost sitting in her favorite seat in the balcony wearing a 1920s-style white dress.

The Tampa Theater in Tampa, Florida, is supposed to be haunted by Foster Fink Finley. The projectionist died of a heart attack in the projection booth in 1965. Although in life Finley kept to his projection booth, he is said to move objects, make sounds, and perform other ghostly feats throughout the theater.

Western States

The Sioux Falls Community Theater in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, has a ghost known as Larry who appears from time to time. He seems to be trying to communicate with theater people but so far has had no success.

In Pleasant Grove, Utah, the Grove Theater, formerly the Alhambra Theater, has had a history of ghostly phenomena. These incidents have included strange noises, doors opening and closing, and mysterious voices.

In Seattle, Washington, the Harvard Exit Theater is said to harbor a group of ghosts. Two female ghosts are said to haunt the lobby, one ghost has been reported on the second floor, and several supposedly haunt the third floor.

The Wisconsin Union Theater houses two ghosts. The first is said to be that of a construction worker who died during the building of the theater in 1939. The second is of a percussionist with the Minneapolis Symphony, who died on March 12, 1950, during a performance.

The famous Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, Minnesota, is said to have been haunted by the ghost of Richard Miller. The young man, who had worked as an usher in the theater, killed himself in 1967.

Dayton, Ohio, has two haunted theaters. Memorial Hall, the home of the Dayton Philharmonic, apparently is haunted by the ghost of a former custodian. Stagehands have reported that the lighting system behaves erratically, and footsteps sound on the overhead (and empty) catwalks. The second of Dayton's haunted theaters is the Victoria Theater, purported to be home to at least two ghosts. The first is the ghost of an actress who disappeared mysteriously in the early 1900s, and who often leaves behind the scent of rose perfume. The other ghost is that of a young woman who died in one of the theater boxes. On one occasion, a man who dared to enter the box reported being slapped across the face by the ghost.

In Honolulu, Hawaii, the Dole Cannery Signature Theaters have a double haunting.

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The first is in Theater 14, in the form of a man in his late fifties who occupies a top corner seat. The second is in a theater bathroom, where the voices of the victims of a school bus crash that happened in the 1980s still can be heard.

See also: Ghosts and Hauntings.

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Giants

Giants are incredibly large human-shaped beings. They are found in folklore and mythology from around the world and are depicted as enemies of humans, indifferent to humans, or, rarely, friends to humans or even heroes.

Mythic Giants

The giants of mythology generally are portrayed as primordial creatures, powerful and sometimes slow moving. They are the personification of the earth's force.

These beings often are described as members of an older race, one that predates humankind or even the gods. Such primordial races of giants include the Greek Titans and the Norse Jotun. The latter were said to reside in a gigantic realm called Jotunheim.

These early gigantic beings were at war with the newcomer gods and were generally the losers in such conflicts. The Titans were supplanted by Zeus and his Olympic pantheon, while the Jotun were continually fighting with the Norse deities and were, in fact, cheated by Odin in a deal to build Asgard, the gods' home.

In the myths of North America, giants are usually portrayed as primal beings, often described as made of earth or rock. In these myths, rather than fighting the gods, the giants are the enemies of humankind and often are destroyed by human heroes.

The bodies of dead giants often play an important role in creation myths, as they are used by gods to form the earth or even the heavens. This occurs in the Norse myth of Ymir and the Mesopotamian myth of Tiamat.

There is a cryptic reference to giants in the Book of Genesis that states "in those days there were giants in the earth." Scholars have long debated whether or not literal giants were meant. In the Book of Kings, David fights the giant Goliath, who is a gigantic man, a champion warrior of the Philistines.

But not all mythological giants are enemies to humankind. In the *Mabinogion,* the Welsh medieval collection of ancient tales, the hero Bran was a giant. He was so powerful that even after foes beheaded him, his head protected his men and guided them to safety.

Folk Giants

In folktales, giants are frequently portrayed as stupid, often are greedy, and are sometimes man-eaters. One of the best-known lines attributed to a rather dim folkloric giant appears in the English "Jack and the Beanstalk." The giant declares:

Fee, fi, fo, fum,
I smell the blood of an Englishman.
Be he alive or be he dead,
I'll grind his bones to make my bread.

Rather grotesquely, this rhyme is often included in collections of nursery rhymes for young children.

The fact that at least two English folktales feature a giant-killer named Jack—"Jack and the Beanstalk" and "Jack the Giant Killer"—adds an interesting twist, since Jack is portrayed not as a traditional, sword-swinging hero but as a trickster. This can be compared to one of the

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Jack the Giant Killer confronts a giant who looks rather unimpressed. This illustration by John Lawson appears in a book of stories by Constance Wilde published in 1888. *(© Image Select/Art Resource, NY)*

few mythological examples of a human defeating a giant. In Homer's *Odyssey,* when Odysseus defeats the one-eyed giant, Cyclops, it is not by force of arms but by trickery.

Folklore does include some friendly giants, particularly in Great Britain. The English giant of Grabbist liked humans and saved the crews of ships in trouble. He also was said to have tossed the devil into the Bristol Channel. Another friendly giant was the giant of Carn Galva in Cornwall, who protected the people from bandits. Finn MacCool, the Irish folk hero, whose stories may date to the first or second century C.E., is featured in later Celtic folklore as a giant.

Christian folklore also has tales of giants. In the Cornish tale of Saint Agnes, a giant named Bolster was enamored of her and followed her around. Saint Agnes was unable to get rid of Bolster, so she challenged him. He was to prove his love for her by filling up a hole in the rocks with his blood. Bolster agreed. What the unfortunate giant did not know was that the hole drained into the sea. And so Bolster bled to death. The village of St. Agnes still holds a Bolster Festival every spring, which includes a puppet show with giant puppets reenacting the story of Bolster's downfall.

Ancient Formations and Modern Incarnations

Archaeological or geological sites are sometimes attributed to giants. The natural rock formation known as the Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland has been explained as the work of giants. Finn MacCool supposedly built the causeway as a means to reach the Scottish island of Staffa.

Some Neolithic stone circles, including Stonehenge, are claimed to be the handiwork of giants. Many ancient monuments, particularly in Scandinavia, are said to be giants' burial sites. And mountains are sometimes described as the bodies of sleeping or dead giants.

In literature, giants often take on more satiric roles. In the medieval Scandinavian epic of Arrow-Odd, a giant girl takes the hero for a doll and picks him up. The story takes a more ribald turn when she discovers he is alive. In Jonathan Swift's 1726 work, *Gulliver's Travels,* the feckless hero has a somewhat similar experience as the pampered pet of the giants.

In the modern world, giants have lost most of their mythic power. They might appear as giant robots in movies such as the 1999 animated feature *The Iron Giant,* or in advertisements selling vegetables as the Green Giant, a kindly and beneficent being.

See also: Upelluri/Ubelluris; Ymir.

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Gilgamesh

(Sumerian and Babylonian)

Gilgamesh was a legendary king of the Sumerian city of Uruk who is celebrated in Sumerian and Babylonian mythology.

Stories about his exploits probably began as oral compositions during the third millennium B.C.E. These stories were first recorded during the third dynasty of Ur, around 2111–2004 B.C.E. In the second millennium B.C.E., Babylonian scribes combined elements of the older epics into a new composition, called *He Who Saw the Deep*. This work eventually became known as *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. The epic uses stories about the hero Gilgamesh to illustrate themes about the brevity and fragility of human life and the responsibilities of leaders.

When the stories about Gilgamesh were first recorded, Ur-Namma was ruler of the newly formed city-state Ur. Ur-Namma sought to stress his connections to his capital city as part of his attempt to claim legitimacy for his new dynasty, Uruk. He invoked the city's gods, built temples in their honor, and claimed to be the older brother of the legendary Gilgamesh. (According to tradition, Gilgamesh was the offspring of the goddess Ninsun.) Ur-Namma was succeeded by Shulgi, who also claimed to be the brother, friend, and comrade of Gilgamesh.

The Five Existing Tales

It is not known how many tales of Gilgamesh were originally recorded. The five surviving stories were inscribed on cuneiform tablets during the eighteenth century B.C.E. by students who practiced their writing by copying texts. The stories are known today by titles given to them by modern translators.

In *Gilgamesh and Aka,* Gilgamesh, king of Uruk, triumphed over his overlord and foe, King Aka of Kish. The story begins with Aka sending emissaries to Uruk with the demand that the city submit to him. Gilgamesh initially sought the counsel of the city elders, who recommended submission. He rejected their advice and rallied the support of the city's young men to prepare for war. Soon after, Aka laid siege and the battle began. Aka's forces were defeated, and he was captured. The story concludes with Gilgamesh showing magnanimity and setting Aka free, allowing him to return to his city.

In *Gilgamesh and Huwawa,* also known as *Gilgamesh and the Cedar Forest,* Gilgamesh sought glory and fame through an expedition to the fabled Cedar Mountain. Gilgamesh and his servant Enkidu traveled to the mountain and encountered the demigod Huwawa, the guardian of the forest. Gilgamesh and Enkidu managed to confound, capture, and eventually slay Huwawa.

A third myth, *Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven,* deals with the antagonistic and perhaps frustrated sexual relationship between Gilgamesh and Inanna, the queen of heaven. Inanna, rebuffed by Gilgamesh, implored her father to grant her control of the Bull of Heaven to kill Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh and his servant Enkidu grappled with the bull. Enkidu seized the bull by its tail while Gilgamesh lifted his mighty axe and killed the bull. Afterward, Gilgamesh gave the meat of the slain bull to the orphans of the city.

The fourth tale is *Gilgamesh and the Netherworld* or *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld.* The story begins just after creation, after heaven and Earth were separated, mankind was established, and the overlordship of the universe was divided among the major gods. A great storm blew over a willow tree, which the goddess Inanna then replanted in her garden. As the tree grew, it was inhabited by three beings—the Snake-That-Knows-No-Charm, an Anzu bird, and a Demon-Maiden.

The goddess complained to Gilgamesh, who destroyed the demons, tore the tree out at its roots, and snapped off its branches. Gilgamesh gave some of the wood to Inanna to be made into a bed and throne, and he used the rest to make two playthings, possibly a ball and stick. These playthings fell into a pit that

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led into the netherworld. Enkidu, Gilgamesh's servant, volunteered to fetch them.

Upon his return to the world of the living, Enkidu told Gilgamesh about the terrible conditions besetting the dead. He reported that the only way to avoid such misery was to have many sons to provide offerings to the gods. Those who were childless would suffer the most, and those who were burned to death and left no remains would become evil ghosts.

In the fifth tale, *The Death of Gilgamesh,* Gilgamesh lay dying and dreamed that the gods were meeting to review his life and discuss his destiny. The deities discussed his exploits but agreed that no mortal would be granted eternal life. The only exception was Ziusudra, the man who had been chosen to survive the epic flood. Gilgamesh, like all men, would go to the netherworld, where he would be reunited with his family and, as a lesser god, would sit in judgment over the dead.

Babylonian Variants

By the twentieth century B.C.E., if not earlier, Sumerian had ceased to be a spoken language and was studied only in schools. But the Gilgamesh stories continued to circulate and inspire fresh compositions, such as one written by an unknown poet, called *Surpassing All Other Kings*. It included parts of *Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven* and *Gilgamesh and Huwawa,* together with new stories about the hero translated into the Babylonian language, Akkadian. Unfortunately, the text survives today only in fragmentary form.

Hundreds of years later, during the second millennium, the epic was revised and expanded into the composition called *He Who Saw the Deep*. The author of this poem is also unknown, but later tradition attributed it to a scholar from Uruk named Sin-liqe-uninni. This, the most famous version of the story, is known as *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. It was copied in many cuneiform versions, and parts have been found at Hattusa (modern Bo-azköy) in Turkey, Ugarit (Ras Shmara) in Syria, and Megiddo in Israel.

A nearly complete edition of the epic, the so-called standard version, was recorded on twelve tablets in the seventh century B.C.E. These tablets were discovered by archaeologists in Nineveh at the library of King Ashurbanipal of Assyria, in what is now part of northern Iraq.

The Epic of Gilgamesh

The epic's prologue begins at the ramparts of Uruk. King Gilgamesh, born of a human father and a divine mother, had superhuman strength and lorded it over his subjects. The gods decided that the best way to dissipate Gilgamesh's superhuman energies was to create a companion who would be his equal. The mother-goddess Aruru created the wild man Enkidu. At first, Enkidu lived happily among the wild animals, freeing them from their traps until a frustrated hunter complained to Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh tamed Enkidu by arranging for him to sleep with a prostitute. This encounter awakened in Enkidu the realization that he was human.

Enkidu entered Uruk and engaged Gilgamesh in a fight that ended in a draw. The two men became inseparable friends. Gilgamesh proposed that they seek fame and glory by traveling to the monster-guarded Cedar Forest. Ignoring the advice of the city's elders, Gilgamesh and Enkidu traveled to the forest. They battled and defeated the monster Humbaba and returned home with cedars and the creature's head.

Once back in Uruk, Gilgamesh put on his royal robes and crown. The goddess Ishtar (the Sumerian Inanna) became enamored of the king and proposed marriage. The hero refused Ishtar and taunted the goddess about her previous lovers, all of whom had suffered terrible fates. Enraged, Ishtar called on her father, Anu, to send her the Bull of Heaven to kill the king, but Gilgamesh and Enkidu managed to slay the bull. The gods then decided to punish Gilgamesh and Enkidu's acts of defiance—their killing of the bull and cutting down of the cedars—and they killed Enkidu.

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Gilgamesh, inconsolable in his grief, went in search of eternal life. On his quest, he crossed high mountains, encountered men in the form of scorpions, and stumbled upon a garden with trees that contained precious jewels. He finally tracked down the ferryman Ur-shanabi. On a voyage fraught with danger, Ur-shanabi took Gilgamesh across the river of death to Uta-napishti, the immortal survivor of the great flood.

Uta-napishti warned Gilgamesh that immortality was reserved for the gods alone, and that it was only because Uta-napishti survived the deluge that they had granted it to him. Uta-napishti then told Gilgamesh where he could find a rejuvenating herb at the bottom of the sea. Gilgamesh dove into the sea, found the plant, and triumphantly set out with it toward Uruk. But along the way, a serpent stole the plant and was promptly rejuvenated, shedding its skin.

Gilgamesh returned to Uruk with the realization that, even though he had failed to attain immortality, his accomplishments as king of Uruk would be his everlasting legacy. Gilgamesh had finally grown up and gained wisdom.

Ira Spar

See also: Bull of Heaven; Culture Heroes; Dilmun; Enkidu; Epics; Inanna/Ishtar; Quests.

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Goblins

(Western European)

In the folklore of Western Europe, goblins are odd, grotesque fairy creatures that are capable of mischievous and even outright evil behavior.

Goblins are generally described as small creatures, about the size of a fairy tale dwarf. Beyond that, descriptions vary from tale to tale, except that all tales describe goblins as hideously ugly. Some goblins can change their shape, taking on animal, though not human, form.

The term *goblin* may come from the Middle English *gobelin,* which in turn may derive from the name of a Norman French ghost or from the Norman word *gobe*. It also may come from Medieval Latin *gobelinus,* ultimately from Greek *kobalos,* or rogue. In addition to playing dark pranks, goblins have some other abilities. They are said to be able to create nightmares to trouble humans, or to steal away human children and sometimes women. The children are sometimes replaced with goblin babies or changelings.

Goblins are also featured in literature. The nineteenth-century English poet Christina Rossetti wrote a poem entitled "Goblin Market," in which she combines the old tradition that fairy food is dangerous to mortals with strong currents of sensuality. Two English fantasy authors, George MacDonald, in *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872), and J.R.R. Tolkien, in *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955), portrayed goblins as evil creatures living underground. Tolkien, however, soon abandoned the idea of goblins and replaced them with the more vicious orcs. In J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series (1997–2007), goblins are portrayed as small, clever, greedy creatures that run Gringotts Bank in Diagon Alley.

Goblins also turn up in fantasy movies, most prominently in the 1986 film *Labyrinth,* which starred David Bowie as the goblin king. The 1986 film *Legend,* starring Tom Cruise,

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and the animated 1985 feature *The Black Cauldron* also featured goblins.

In the real world, there is a type of shark known as the goblin shark. But unlike its namesake, it is not evil and does not harm humans. It is, however, an unattractive creature.

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Golem

(Jewish)

The golem, a figure from Jewish mysticism and folklore, was an animated being formed from inanimate material. It had no soul.

The golem is mentioned only once in the Bible, in Psalm 139:16: "Thine eyes did see mine unformed substance." *Golme* is the Hebrew word for "unformed substance," the human body before the soul is breathed into it. An entire corpus of legend and story has arisen from this single instance.

The first detailed discussions of golems appear in the Talmud, a 2,000-year-old repository of Jewish wisdom, law, legend, and philosophy. The rabbis of the Talmud speak of golems in a very matter-of-fact way, as if creating these beings from clay, dust, and incantation was a simple task. For example, one section of the Talmud states that "Rabbi Chanina and Rabbi Oshayah would engage themselves in *Sefer Yetzirah* (one of the primary mystical texts of Kabbalah) every [Friday] before the Sabbath, [and] would create for themselves a prime calf, and would eat it."

Another section relates, "Rava created a man and sent him to R. Zeira. The Rabbi spoke to him but he did not answer. Then he said: 'You are [coming] from the pietists. Return to your dust.'" Within Talmudic literature, this simple and straightforward telling is the only instance in which a golem is created by a single person. The story points out that if the golem were a true man, Zeira could not have dismissed him as quickly as he did. That he was able to do so, returning the golem to lifeless dust so easily, and was not punished for such an action proves that golems are not really living beings.

Creation and Deconstruction of a Golem

Many different methods of creating a golem are set out in the various texts. One thing they all have in common is that purity of the creator's body and mind, as well as that of the space and materials involved in the creation, is paramount. The first step is to create the form, using soil or, in some cases, clay. It does not matter if the form is perfect, but it does need to resemble the thing it will be when finished.

Most "recipes" for golem creation include a detailed statement of specific letter combinations that are required to bring about the "birth" of a golem. Certain texts call for the kabbalist, the expert in this Jewish form of mysticism, to walk around the form while reciting the combinations.

Tradition states that a golem is "born" with the word *emet,* which means "truth," inscribed on its forehead. In some cases, the kabbalist inscribes the word before commencing with the ritual; in others, the word appears on its own.

Once the golem is functional, it is given specific tasks. After it has served its purpose, the creature must be deconstructed. Just as there are various methods of golem creation, there are numerous methods of golem deconstruction, each of which is connected, in some way, to the manner in which it was created.

For example, whether the golem is created through the mental exercise of connecting these letters in a circle or through the actual walking of the circle, the golem is deconstructed by doing the exact opposite. The letter combinations are repeated in reverse or the circle is traced in the opposite direction.

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To complete the deconstruction, the first letter of the word *emet* is erased. This leaves the word *met,* which means "dead" or "death." As the letter is erased, the golem crumbles to either dust or soil.

In some later traditions, a parchment containing the word *emet* is placed under the tongue of the golem, either instead of or in addition to the words inscribed on the forehead. In these cases, the parchment must be removed from the golem's mouth before the deconstruction is complete.

Jeremiah and Sira

The prophet Jeremiah and his son, Sira, created a golem. The words *Yhvh elohim emet,* which mean "God is truth," appeared on the golem's forehead. This newly formed artificial man had a knife in his hand, and with it he erased the first letter of the word *emet,* an *aleph* (the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet), which changed the phrase to *Yhvh elohim met,* meaning "God is dead."

Jeremiah tore his garments and asked, "Why have you erased the *aleph* from *emet*?" The golem answered, "God has made you in his image and in his shape and form. But now that you have created a man like him, people will say: There is no God in the world beside these two!"

Realizing what they had done, Jeremiah asked, "What solution is there?" The golem explained, "Write the alphabet backward on the earth with intense concentration. Only do not meditate in the sense of building up, but the other way round."

Jeremiah and Ben Sira did as they were told to do, and, before their eyes, the golem turned to dust. Then Jeremiah said, "Truly, one should study these things only in order to know the power and omnipotence of the Creator of the world, but not in order really to practice them."

This is the only example in all golem literature of a golem who speaks. Since a golem does not have an intelligent soul, the tales say, it cannot speak. This lack of speech is one thing that will always demonstrate that a being is a golem, as the literature also states that golems cannot be physically discerned from men.

Superhuman Strength

Some of the later golem tales speak of the ability of the golem to grow to immense proportions, strong enough to subdue all but the strongest of men. Many golems are put to good use as guards, especially as guardians of sacred objects, such as Torah scrolls, or of buildings, often synagogues.

Golems, while not human, were still bound by Jewish law. They would not take a person's life unless it was absolutely necessary, and they were not capable of falsehood.

Through the centuries, numerous powers have been associated with golems. They were able to become invisible at will, which made them better guards. One power that became standard in eighteenth-century golem literature was golems' ability to grow. Many tales relate that golems would begin their lives only a few feet (less than 1 meter) tall and slowly grow to tremendous size. One such example is found in Jacob Grimm's *Journal for Hermits*:

> Every day [the golem] gains weight and becomes somewhat larger and stronger than all the others in the house, regardless of how little he was to begin with. But one man's golem once grew so tall, and he heedlessly let him keep on growing so long that he could no longer reach his forehead. In terror he ordered the servant to take off his boots, thinking that when he bent down he could reach his forehead. So it happened, and the first letter was successfully erased, but the whole heap of clay fell on the Jew and crushed him.

The Golem of Prague

Golems were used to guard against blood libel, a common form of anti-Semitism practiced in

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the Middle Ages. The story of Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague tells of a golem that saved Prague's Jews from those who wished to destroy them.

Legend has it that in 1580 the rabbi created a golem with his son-in-law, Rabbi Isaac ha-Kohen, and his disciple, Rabbi Ya'akov Sason ha-Levi. This golem successfully undertook many tasks. The following tale of Rabbi Loew's golem has been retold in many cultures as the tale of the sorcerer's apprentice.

The golem of Prague was given a name, Yossele. One day, upon leaving his home, Rabbi Loew instructed his wife, Perele, to leave Yossele the mute alone. Even so, she took it upon herself to put him to work. She showed Yossele how to draw water and pour it into a barrel, and then left him to complete the job without further supervision. Yossele returned time and again to the barrel, never stopping, even after the barrel began to overflow. He continued until the rabbi's house was flooded. Upon arriving home, Rabbi Loew put a stop to Yossele's work and told Perele that she should never again use Yossele for household tasks.

The figure of the golem has appeared in many guises throughout the ages. Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* (1818) is essentially a golem tale, and American science fiction author Piers Anthony included a golem story, called *Golem in the Gears* (1986), in his series about the fictional realm of Xanth. A golem also was featured in a 1997 episode of the television series *The X-Files*.

David M. Honigsberg

See also: *Retelling: The Golem of Prague.*

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Grail/Holy Grail

(Western European)

The story of the Holy Grail is perhaps the most mystical of all the Arthurian romances. For nearly a thousand years, stories in languages ranging from Welsh to French, German, English, and even Hebrew have presented the Grail in many guises: as the chalice used at the Last Supper, as the cup containing drops of Christ's blood, as the Welsh Celtic Cauldron of Ceridwen, and as a magic platter owned by the sixth-century Welsh King Ryhdderch of Strathclyde.

The word *grail* derives from the Latin *gradale,* which means "by degree" or "in stages," and it is used to refer to a dish or platter brought in at various times during a feast. Whatever form the Holy Grail takes, it is always connected with nourishment: It provides those who see it with whatever meat and drink they wish for and also has tremendous healing powers.

The earliest surviving manuscript containing the Grail legend is the twelfth-century *Conte del Graal* (*The Story of the Grail*), written by Chrétien de Troyes. The young knight Perceval and the Fisher King, the wounded ruler and keeper of the Grail, beheld a magnificent procession. Youths brought forth precious objects, and a beautiful maiden bore a chalice, or Grail, wrought of fine gold that gleamed with precious stones. This cup held a single Host that sufficed to sustain the Fisher King.

Robert de Boron of Burgundy composed a trilogy of poems—"Joseph d'Arimathe," "Merlin," and "Perceval"—sometime between 1202 and 1212 C.E. This work borrowed from the apocryphal, fourth-century *Gospel of Nicodemus,* in which the Grail was the cup used by Joseph of Arimathea to catch Christ's blood as he was brought down from the cross. Joseph then brought the Grail to Britain. The *Prose Lancelot,* written by an unknown French author or authors around 1215–1230, calls the

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Grail the *Sankgreal,* punning on the Old French words *sang real,* or royal blood, and *san Greal,* or Holy Grail.

The French Arthurian tradition developed the concept of a priestly house that served the Grail in a place apart from the world. The German tradition was based on this concept. Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival,* which probably dates from the first part of the thirteenth century, owes a great deal to Chrétien de Troyes. Von Eschenbach introduced a number of strange variants: He called the Grail a gemstone, *lapis exillis,* located the Grail castle in Spain, created an evil wizard, Klingsor, and set up a series of adventures for Parzival's father. All of this preceded his story of Parzival. This tale of the Grail quest details the healing of the maimed Fisher King, Amfortas, whose sins, deadly wound, and impotence had turned the fertile earth into a wasteland.

Britain's Sir Thomas Malory made the next major contribution to the Grail story, in 1485. In his work, *Le Morte d'Arthur,* the Grail appears in Camelot, and Arthur's knights vow to find it. This quest ultimately weakens Camelot and exposes the human sin that leads, inevitably, to the destruction of Arthur's realm. In Malory's telling, Lancelot cannot attain the Grail. Although he is the world's greatest knight, he is a sinful man. Lancelot's pure son, Galahad, succeeds in attaining the Grail but dies immediately thereafter. Perceval sees the Grail and also dies. Only Bors, who is the loyal kinsman, husband, and father, sees the Grail and lives, returning to a Camelot that has been much weakened by its brush with sanctity. Finally,

The vessel is surrounded by the Grail maidens in this painting by Wilhelm Hauschild (1827–1887). This work, titled "The Miracle of the Grail," and other paintings in the romantic style portraying scenes from Arthurian legend are located at Neuschwanstein Castle in Bavaria, Germany. *(Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY)*

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a hand removes the Grail from Earth and transports it to Heaven.

The Grail story continues to inspire artists, composers, and authors. C.S. Lewis's novel *That Hideous Strength* (1945) features a Mr. Fisher King, who is a descendant of a Pendragon line of kings. In Marion Zimmer Bradley's revisionist novel *The Mists of Avalon* (1983), the Grail is a vessel borne by a priestess of the Old Religion, and Susan Shwartz's *The Grail of Hearts* (1991) is a deliberately heretical account. The Grail appears as a symbol of redemption in Richard Wagner's nineteenth-century opera *Parsifal* and in the 1991 novel and movie *The Fisher King,* in which the redemption is personal.

Susan M. Shwartz

See also: Archetype.

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Grateful Dead

The theme of the grateful dead is found in many countries, from Ireland to Turkey, and even in the apocryphal *Book of Tobit*.

In the basic form of the tale, a traveler comes across a corpse that has been denied burial. Sometimes the reason for this punishment is an unpaid debt. In a Sephardic Jewish version from Turkey, the denial of burial is due to a false accusation of treason. In all versions, the traveler takes pity on the dead man, satisfies the debt or pays enough to permit a decent burial, and then goes on his way.

The traveler then falls into life-threatening danger and is rescued by a mysterious figure, or discovers a wondrous treasure with the aid of the mysterious figure. This figure appears in the shape of a man, as a white-clad or shrouded figure, or sometimes in animal or bird form. No matter the appearance, the figure eventually drops its disguise and turns out to be none other than the grateful ghost or spirit of the dead man for whom the traveler had given an honorable burial.

More than a hundred grateful-dead stories exist around the world. Some of them are purely secular, while others have strong religious themes, generally preaching the rewards of charity and the need for a proper burial. The importance of such a burial can be found in the beliefs of many cultures, including ancient Greek, Jewish, and Christian. One of the most important obligations in these cultures is that of paying proper respect to the dead so that the soul may find peace.

There is also a related, nonsupernatural tale type. In these stories, a prince or other hero pities a prisoner and frees him. Later, after he has been taken prisoner himself, the hero is released by the grateful man who he had freed.

The band known as the Grateful Dead took their name from this folktale type.

See also: Tale Types.

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Gremlins

(English)

Gremlins are modern mythical creatures that are similar to imps and mischievous sprites. They are known primarily for causing

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malfunctions or unexplainable technical problems in aircraft. Increasingly, they are blamed for anything that goes wrong in any mechanical device that cannot be readily explained. Though tricksters at heart, they are thought to be somewhat malevolent.

Gremlins are a fairly recent invention. They may have originated during British air operations in the Middle East in the 1920s, or possibly during World War I.

There are several physiological explanations for the appearance of gremlins. One theory is that pilots who are subjected to long hours at high altitudes experience a minor bursting of capillaries in the eyes, which causes stimulation of the optic nerve. The human brain is programmed to create patterns out of chaos. So these random neural firings may be interpreted as faces and expressions. This is more likely to occur in times of stress, such as when an aircraft is malfunctioning.

The British author Roald Dahl claims to have coined the word *gremlin,* inspired by his experiences as a Royal Air Force fighter pilot. A fellow airman who had served in the Middle East told Dahl stories of inexplicable mechanical failures. Dahl's book *The Gremlins* was published in 1943.

Two Warner Brothers' wartime cartoons quickly followed. In *Falling Hare,* Bugs Bunny battled gremlins as they dismantled his airplane while in flight, and *Russian Rhapsody* satirized a cartoonish Adolf Hitler whose plane has been invaded by gremlins. Around the same time, Walt Kelly, the creator of the comic strip *Pogo,* introduced a character called Gremlin Gus. Disney had planned to develop a feature cartoon called *The Gremlins,* but the project was canceled when the company determined that gremlins were a fad that had already peaked.

The depiction of gremlins has evolved over the years. A popular episode in the *Twilight Zone* television series featured a malevolent gremlin. The creature destroyed the engine of an airplane while a passenger, played by William Shatner, helplessly tried to warn other passengers and the flight crew. In 1984, Steven Spielberg produced the motion picture *Gremlins,* and the sequel, *Gremlins 2,* in 1990. Spielberg's gremlins started out as fuzzy, big-eared, and cuddly and morphed into terrifying creatures of destruction.

Even in this day of pressurized jet aircraft, the mythology of gremlins is prevalent among pilots. Much that goes wrong in modern airplanes is attributed to computer and electronic malfunctions that often cannot be duplicated or traced. Initially, pilots might shrug off problems in these computerized planes as "stray electrons." But sometimes, especially if the malfunction has an underpinning of frustration, the pilots may look at each other and say one word: "Gremlins."

Byron Tetrick

See also: Tricksters.

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Griots/Griottes/Jelis

(West African)

Griots, or their female counterparts, griottes, are bards from West Africa, particularly in Mande and Senegalese society. They are also known as *jelis*.

Like the ancient Celtic bards, the griots were a combination of entertainers, praise-singers, and historians. And like their Celtic counterparts, the griots were once high enough in rank to be councilors to kings and tutors to princes. They were also the knowledge keepers, those who would remember all of the dates important to a clan or village, such as births, wars, and deaths. A griot might serve as a judge, mediating arguments and advising families, and even arranging the terms of marriage. The griots also were trusted messengers to the ruling class.

In the modern world, few families can afford to have their own griots, so one griot may

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travel from place to place. They no longer have their formerly high status, although some traces linger. In Senegal, for example, the griots are the only public performers, and in Senegalese tradition only griots may speak directly to rulers. The griots are otherwise said to be below the lowest status, which may be the reason they have such freedom.

Griots play a variety of musical instruments, depending on each griot's personal taste and training. The oldest instrument griots play is the *balafon,* a wooden xylophone, but griots may also play the *kora,* which is a harp or lute with twenty-one strings, the *ngoni,* a true lute, the *xalam,* which is played like a guitar, or the *jembe, tama,* and *sabar,* which are three types of drums.

See also: Jongleurs; Minstrels; Troubadours.

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Gudrun/Kudrun

(German)

The Germanic medieval folk epic *Gudrun,* sometimes called *Kudrun,* was probably written at the start of the thirteenth century and was likely based on earlier folk stories. The story takes place over the course of several generations and has many familiar themes that are interesting to folklorists and useful to storytellers.

Hagen and the Princesses

The tale begins with the story of Hagan, a king's son who was carried off at seven years of age by a griffin—a creature with the head and wings of an eagle and the body and tail of a lion—that intended to feed the boy to its chicks. The boy escaped by falling out of the nest when the griffin's chicks were fighting over their dinner.

Hungry and frantically dodging the mother griffin, Hagen found shelter in a cave with three princesses who also had escaped the griffin. The small group started home, foraging for food. They eventually came upon a ship that had been wrecked in a storm. Hagen investigated and discovered armor and a sword on the ship. With this, he killed all the griffins.

A ship belonging to the Count of Garadie found the four young people and took them on board. The count had plans to hold the group for ransom. Furious, Hagen beat off the count's warriors and threatened the count. He yielded and took Hagen and the princesses home.

Hagen was reunited with his parents, who also took the three princesses under their protection. Hagen's father decided to abdicate, and Hagen, married to one of the princesses, Hilde (or Hilda), became king.

Hagen's Children

The daughter of Hagen and Hilde was also named Hilde. She grew into such a lovely young woman that Hagen literally had to fight off all suitors, refusing to accept any of them for his daughter.

King Hetel heard of young Hilde's beauty and sent an envoy to win her. In the envoy were his trusted minstrel, Horant, and his chief warrior, Wate. After hearing Horant's song, Hilde agreed to meet Wate and Horant at their ship, and she was promptly carried off.

The outraged Hagen pursued Hetel and challenged him. Hilde pleaded with them to stop fighting, and Hetel, in love with Hilde, lay down his arms. Hagen, impressed that Hetel had risked his life for love of Hilde, accepted Hetel as Hilde's husband.

The Third Generation

The daughter of Hilde and Hetel, Hagen's granddaughter, Gudrun, was even more beautiful than her mother and was wooed by many

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suitors. The primary suitors were King Herwig, King Hartmut, and the Moorish King Siegfried. Hetel refused all three, but Gudrun liked Herwig. A battle ensued between Hetel and Herwig, but when Hetel saw how brave and determined Herwig was, he accepted him as the one to claim Hilde's hand.

Jealous Siegfried then attacked Herwig, but Hetel and his army came to Herwig's aid. In Hetel's absence, the third suitor, Hartmut, tried to win Gudrun, but she refused him. In spite of her protests, Hartmut carried her off. When Gudrun's father learned of this, he set out in pursuit but was slain by Ludwig, Hartmut's father.

Hartmut brought Gudrun home with him and tried to get her to marry him. His mother, Queen Gerlint, decided to break her spirit. Gudrun was treated like a lowly servant, beaten, and kept imprisoned. Yet she continued to refuse Hartmut's advances.

Meanwhile, Herwig and the widowed Hilde organized an army and set out to rescue Gudrun. In a great battle, Herwig killed Ludwig, avenging Hetel. The terrified Queen Gerlint, realizing that her foes had taken her castle, fled to Gudrun and begged for mercy. But Wate, Hetel's true-hearted warrior, beheaded Gerlint.

Herwig and Gudrun were reunited, and he returned her safely back to her mother. Hartmut's life was spared, and he fled the country. In the end, Herwig and Gudrun were joyously married.

See also: Epics.

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Habaek and Haemosu

(Korean)

In Korean mythology, Habaek was a water deity who lived in the Yalu River, and Haemosu was the sun deity who traveled across the sky in Oryonggeo, the five-dragon chariot. These deities are said to be the ancestors of a Korean royal family.

Habaek had three daughters, Yuhwa, Hweonhwa, and Wuihwa. Yuhwa, the eldest, was carried off by Haemosu in Oryonggeo to be his bride. It is not recorded whether or not Yuhwa had any say in the matter.

Yuhwa's father was angered that Haemosu had not bothered to honor him with either an official offer of marriage or a proper wedding ceremony. Habaek sent a message to Haemosu demanding that the deity return to settle matters.

Haemosu returned to Habaek's palace, where the two deities tested each other in a shape-shifting duel. Habaek turned himself into a carp, but Haemosu quickly turned into an otter and caught him. Then Habaek changed into a deer, but Haemosu became a wolf and chased him. Habaek hastily turned into a quail and took flight, but Haemosu changed into a falcon and caught him once again.

This time, Habaek gave up and acknowledged Haemosu's supremacy over air, land, and sea. Haemosu in turn agreed to an official marriage ceremony, and Habaek officially sent Yuhwa off to live in the sky with Haemosu.

Yuhwa, however, decided she did not wish to go. Before Haemosu's chariot could leave the water, she leapt from it and returned to her father. After all his work, Habaek was furious. He ordered that Yuhwa's lips be stretched out, which presumably changed her into a fish, and she was placed in a stream.

Yuhwa was eventually caught in a fisherman's net and taken to the court of the king. There, her lips were cut three times, breaking her father's spell, and she was able to speak again.

While Yuhwa was living in the royal household, Haemosu came to her in the form of a sunbeam and impregnated her. Their child is said to have been Dongmyeongseong, or Chumong, a historical figure who lived at the turn of the first century C.E. He went on to found Goguryeo, one of the Three Kingdoms of Korea.

See also: Dongmyeongseong/Chumong.

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Hags

In modern usage the word *hag* is used to describe a crone or old woman and is generally considered to be an insult. This is not the case in myth and folklore, where hags are creatures of power.

There are different types of hags. In Slavic lore, a hag was a mythical being of magical power, such as Baba-Yaga, who is often able to control natural forces. In Western Europe, a folkloric hag was hideously ugly and, during and after the witch trials of the late Middle Ages, thought to be associated with the devil. The modern image of the hideous witch—seen at Halloween and prominent in popular culture, as in *The Wizard of Oz*—is a descendent of that perverse type of hag.

It was believed during the Middle Ages that hags would seize a man as a mount and "ride" him in his sleep. This gave the victim nightmares and pain, and could, it was believed, even lead to his death.

In Celtic mythology, hags possessed some of the same powers as the Slavic hags. They could sometimes be seen carrying rocks in their aprons. If the rocks were dropped, hags could create mountains from them. And if two hags took to quarreling, wise mortals were warned to take care, as battling crones were known to hurl trees and boulders.

See also: Baba Yaga.

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Hand of Glory

(European)

Despite the name, there is nothing glorious about the Hand of Glory, an eerie English folk belief. The Hand of Glory is cut from the corpse of a murderer and then taken through a series of elaborate preparations to give it black-magic properties. Its primary power is the ability to keep the members of a household in an enchanted sleep.

To prepare a Hand of Glory, a sorcerer would sever the right hand of a murderer from the corpse as it hung from the gallows, always at night and sometimes at the eclipse of the Moon. The hand was then wrapped in a shroud, squeezed until there was no more blood in it, and pickled for two weeks in an earthenware jar. After that, it was covered with vervain—a traditional magical herb—and either placed in an oven or set out in the sun to dry.

Meanwhile, special candles were made. These had to be made from the fat of another murderer, with strands of that murderer's hair for wicks. These were called dead-man's candles. The candles were fitted between the fingers of the hand. Once the candles were lit, only milk could be used to extinguish them.

It was believed that the Hand of Glory with the candles lit would freeze anybody who saw it or would put them into a deep sleep. This was a perfect tool for a thief. Also, if the hand's thumb would not light, it was a warning that someone in the house was still awake, immune to the magic. Magical countermeasures could be taken against the hand's magic, including the smearing of various ointments of animal blood or fat over a threshold.

In Germany, there was a similar, even more gruesome version of the Hand of Glory, called the Thieves' Lights. The unborn child of a pregnant murderess or thief who was killed or had committed suicide was cut from the dead mother's body at midnight. The child's fingers were then cut off. All of this was done in utter silence.

The fingers could be lit and extinguished by thought alone and would never burn up. Unlike the Hand of Glory, the Thieves' Lights kept their owner invisible but allowed him to see clearly in utter darkness. Like the Hand of Glory, the Thieves' Lights put everyone within range into a deep sleep.

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Belief in the Hand of Glory and the Thieves' Lights was strongly held in the sixteenth century during the witch hunts. A Scottish man was tortured into confessing that he had used a Hand of Glory to break into a church, and two German women were made to admit they had used Thieves' Lights. Belief in the Hand of Glory continued into the nineteenth century.

See also: Black Magic; Hands.

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Hands

The human hand, whether open or clenched, is one of the most potent world symbols in mythology, folklore, and superstition. The various beliefs hold the germs of many story ideas.

Itching palms, like itchy noses, have a common folk belief: If the right palm itches, it means incoming money, but if the left palm itches, it means money owed.

Left-Handedness

Handedness, the tendency of people to be left-handed or right-handed, is associated with perhaps the largest number of folk beliefs. Most of these associate left-handedness with evil.

In Arab countries, the reason is purely practical. The left hand was once used for sanitary purposes and is still considered unclean. But some Arab countries take that idea even further. In Morocco, for instance, a left-handed person is thought to be in league with the devil.

The Inuit people see left-handers as sorcerers. In Christian folk beliefs, the devil is almost always portrayed as being left-handed. Blessings and the sign of the cross are always made with the right hand.

In Buddhism, the path to Nirvana, the state of enlightenment and salvation, is divided in two. The left-hand side is the wrong way of life, while the right-hand side is the so-called eightfold path to enlightenment. In the United States and other countries, it is always the right hand that is raised when oaths are made.

There are, however, exceptions to this rule. The Zuni of the American Southwest hold that the left hand is wise and that left-handedness is lucky. And in Western cultures a wedding ring is traditionally worn on the left hand since that hand's ring finger was believed to have a direct link to the heart.

Other Beliefs

In the Philippines, it is believed that to kiss a sleeping baby's hands means that he or she will grow up to be overly sensitive. In Western cultures, crossed fingers on either hand ward off bad luck—especially the bad luck that might come from telling a lie.

There are several hand gestures that mean different things in different cultures. In the West, a thumbs-up gesture means victory or approval; this gesture is said to come from ancient Roman gladiatorial combat and the signal that spared a fighter's life. But the same thumbs-up gesture is considered obscene in many Arab countries. The same holds true of the Western "OK" gesture. The traditional Western "V" for victory can mean approval in certain Eastern cultures if it is made with the palm facing out. With the palm facing in, it has an obscene meaning.

Another hand gesture with many meanings is the "horns," in which the two middle fingers are folded down and the index finger and pinkie are held straight up, forming the horns. With the hand held up, this is an ancient protective symbol that has been found in carvings of the Iranian Sasanian royalty. With the hand held against the forehead, this same gesture becomes the Italian *mano cornuta,* which is an in-

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sult telling a man he has been cuckolded. Thrust out from the body, the horns become a threat or cast or repel the evil eye.

The *mano fico,* also called *figa* or the fig gesture, is a fist with the thumb between the index and middle fingers. Both the Etruscans and the Romans used this gesture as a protective amulet. It now has two meanings: It is an obscene gesture, but it also signifies protection against the evil eye. The latter is found in charms worn by Italians and Hispanics.

An open hand is used on signs to indicate "stop" or "no trespassing." It also has been found in drawings from the Stone Age on cave walls.

The open hand gesture, called *hamesh* in Hebrew and *hamsa* in Arabic, is a common protective amulet. In Jewish tradition, it is also known as the Hand of God, or the Hand of Miriam (sister of Moses), while in Islamic tradition it is the Hand of Fatima (daughter of Muhammad). An image of this gesture may show simply an open hand or a hand with a thumb on either side. Some versions add an eye to the center of the palm. This is called the eye-in-hand motif.

The open hand is also a sign of peace. It shows that the person holds no weapons. And it leads to the gesture of friendship: the shaking of hands.

See also: Hand of Glory.

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Hannahanna/ Hannahannas (Hittite)

Hannahanna is the Hittite mother of the gods.

This temperamental matriarch helped to settle domestic issues. She mended a rift between the storm god, Teshub, and his son, Telepinu. When the adolescent stormed off in a fit of rage, Teshub complained to Hannahanna. The goddess sent Teshub to search for his son. When the father was unsuccessful, Hannahanna directed one of her bees to sting Telepinu awake so that he would return home.

Hannahanna also had her own fit of anger and disappeared for a time. While she was gone, cattle and sheep bore no young, and both human and animal mothers ignored their children. It was only when Hannahanna's anger was sent to the so-called Dark Earth that she returned in joy and all was normal again.

Hannahanna also made sure that marital affairs ran smoothly. When the daughter of the sea god married Telepinu, it was Hannahanna who told Teshub to pay the sea god the bride price, making the marriage official.

Ira Spar

See also: Mother Goddess/Earth Mother.

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Hansel and Gretel

(Western European)

"Hansel and Gretel" is one of the most familiar folktales of those collected by the Brothers Grimm. Two children, abandoned by their parents in the wilderness, are captured by an evil witch who plans to eat them. The children trick the witch, push her into her own oven, free her captives, and take her treasure.

"Hansel and Gretel" is part of a wider folktale type, called "The Children and the Ogre." In this tale type, the witch is replaced by an ogre or sometimes a devil. In many versions, the children are captured in the forest and carried to the ogre's home in a bag.

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The evil witch of "Hansel and Gretel" lived in a gingerbread house. The version of the witch's house shown here (c. 1955) was part of a "Fairytale Forest" through which children could walk and see fairy tale images "come to life." *(Evans/Stringer/Hulton Archive/Getty Images)*

On the way to the ogre's house, the children manage to escape but are recaptured, sometimes once, sometimes a ritual three times. Once there, the children trick the ogre and generally flee, often after three ritual deceptions, rather than destroying the ogre. There sometimes is a secondary plot, in which the ogre is fooled into killing (and sometimes eating) his offspring instead of the human children.

The Grimm Brothers' version of "Hansel and Gretel" exists in many editions and retellings. Their version inspired an 1893 opera by German composer Engelbert Humperdinck. Western sensibilities shied away from the original concept that it was the children's mother who suggested the abandonment. In these slightly gentler versions, the mother is replaced by a stereotypical evil stepmother.

Versions of this tale type can be found in stories from Europe, Asia, and various parts of Africa.

See also: Brothers Grimm; Tale Types.

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Harpies

(Greek)

In Greek and Roman mythology, the harpies were creatures who were employed by the higher gods to carry out punishment for crimes.

The name *harpies* comes from the Greek word *harpuai,* meaning "robbers." Early Greek myths featured them as winged, beautiful women. Over time, the image changed from women to winged monsters with old women's faces and sharp talons. There were three main harpies, called Aello, Ocypete, and Celaeno. These three were either the daughters of a nymph, Electra, and a giant, Thaumas, or, in other accounts, the offspring of two storm deities.

The harpies carried criminals off to the underworld, stealing or fouling their food until the wrongdoers starved. King Phineus of Thrace was punished in this way for his crime of cruelty toward his son and contempt of the gods. Phineus was eventually set free. He helped the Greek adventurers known as the Argonauts to find the Golden Fleece. Calais and Zetes, two Argonauts who were the winged sons of Boreas, were grateful for Phineus's help and drove the harpies away.

Today, the word *harpy* is used to describe a shrewish woman.

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Hathor

(Egyptian)

Hathor was one of many ancient Egyptian fertility goddesses. Playing important roles in childbirth and nursing, she was primarily a goddess of love and music. Hathor appeared in the form of a cow, as a woman with a cow's head, or as merely the horns surrounding a solar disk.

The name *Hathor* means "House of Horus." Hathor was the mother or wife of Horus, the sky god, and was herself a sky deity, particularly of the night sky. She also embodied the eye of the sun god, Re. In this form, she was not a joyful goddess of love, but a rampaging, violent force. She was sometimes referred to as the "mistress of drunkenness," which indicates both joyful inebriation and a more ecstatic and violent state.

The *menat* (a certain form of beaded necklace) and the *sistrum* (a kind of metal rattle) were dedicated to Hathor, and with these instruments her rage was soothed. Her worshippers would celebrate Hathor as "mistress of the dance, queen of happiness."

Hathor also provided life to those in the netherworld. She was patron goddess of the necropolis at Thebes and either the mother of Re or his daughter. As the divine mother of the king, she suckled Re. In some versions of her story, she did this in the form of a woman; in others, she was a cow.

Hathor's temples and shrines existed throughout Egypt and its areas of influence. Some of the more important locations beyond Thebes were Dendera, Kusae, and Meir. Hathor had close ties with the Syrian city of Byblos, and at mines in the Sinai, she was revered as the "mistress of turquoise."

In the myths of Egypt there were also characters called *hathors,* often seven in number, which were the personifications of fate. They appeared during childbirth and pronounced the destiny of the newborn.

The Greeks called her *Athyr* and identified her with their goddess Aphrodite.

Noreen Doyle

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Havelock the Dane

(English)

The English story of Havelock the Dane is an example of a medieval romance based on folklore. The earliest written examples of this story are in Norman French, the literary language of twelfth-century Britain. The romance places Havelock in the era of King Arthur, yet there is no historical evidence that he ever existed.

Havelock was born the son and heir of Birkabegn, king of Denmark. The king died soon after the baby's birth. Earl Godard, who was named regent and guardian to Havelock and his two sisters, wanted the throne for himself and killed the two girls. He instructed a fisherman, Grim, to throw the baby boy into the sea.

But Grim, who was unaware that the baby was heir to the throne, could not kill the innocent child and took him home instead. In some versions, Godard's men threw the baby into the sea, and Grim rescued him.

Grim and his wife decided to bring up the boy as their own. That very night, they saw a ray of light shining out of the baby's mouth as he slept and discovered a royal birthmark on his shoulder. For protection, Grim and his family took the baby to England. There, Havelock grew into a fine young man, so strong that he won every test of his skills.

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Meanwhile, King Athelwold of England died, leaving behind his baby daughter, Goldborough. On his deathbed, Athelwold told the new king, Godrich, Earl of Cornwall, that when Goldborough came of age she should be wed to the strongest man in England. King Godrich raised the girl. When she was of age, he kept the promise he had made to the king. Goldborough married Havelock.

With money given to him by Havelock, Grim founded Grim's Town, or Grimby, and Havelock and his new bride settled there. On their wedding night, Goldborough dreamed that Havelock became king of Denmark. Waking from the dream, Goldborough saw the light shining from Havelock's mouth as he slept.

The next day, Grim confirmed Havelock's birthright, and Havelock returned to Denmark to claim his throne. The treacherous Godard was put to death. Havelock and Goldborough became the rightful king and queen of Denmark and England. They had fifteen children and lived and ruled happily together for sixty years.

See also: Culture Heroes.

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Heart in the Egg

In the world folklore tale type "heart in the egg," the villain of the story, an ogre, a sorcerer, a devil, or some other supernatural being, could not be killed because he kept his heart, or his life force, hidden apart from his body. The only way to slay the villain was to find and destroy his heart.

There are many versions of this tale type. The basic story begins with someone, usually a princess, or something, such as a magical object, that must be rescued or recovered from the villain. In the case of the princess, the villain may be holding her either as a prize or as a prospective bride.

The hero may be a prince or a commoner. He may be wandering lost in the forest and stumble across the villain's home, or he may be deliberately questing for the princess. Along the way, the hero helps an animal, or three animals, who promises to help him when he most needs such help.

The hero may try and fail to kill the villain, or be warned in time not to try. The princess, or the villain's wife or lover, tells the hero where the heart may be found and how the villain can be slain. There are usually three to four levels of protection for the heart. For example, the heart may be in an egg in a bird in a fish in a fox.

The hero calls upon his animal helper or helpers. If there is one helper, the animal helps the hero destroy the layers protecting the heart. If there are three helpers, then each in turn destroys one level until the egg is revealed. The hero destroys the egg, and the villain dies.

Examples of this tale type can be found across Europe and the Near East, as well as in North America and the Caribbean. The Russian composer Igor Stravinsky used this tale type in his ballet *The Firebird* (1910). The ballet follows the basic story of the captive princess, the helpful animal, the deathless villain, and the hidden soul that the hero destroys.

See also: Motifs.

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Hebat/Hepit/Hepatu

(Hittite)

In Hittite mythology, Hebat was the wife of the storm god, Teshub. She was the goddess of beauty, fertility, and royalty. Hebat is sometimes depicted standing on her sacred animal, the lion.

After the storm god's failed attack on Ullikummi, the stone giant, Hebat was forced out of her temple and cut off from the other gods. As Teshub went to fight Ullikummi again, Hebat sat in a high watchtower and worried that her husband would be defeated once more. Finally, Tasmisus, Teshub's brother, brought word of Teshub's victory.

See also: Motifs.

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Hector

(Greek)

In Greek mythology, Hector, prince of Troy, was the city's greatest hero. He played an important role in Troy's defense against the Greeks during the Trojan War, and he led the Trojan army into battle.

Hector was the son of King Priam and Queen Hecuba. He is described in the *Iliad* as brave and honorable, a good leader, and a loving husband.

The great Greek warrior Achilles refused to fight the Trojans after a quarrel with King Agamemnon, the Greek commander. Since Achilles refused to lead the Greek forces, his friend Patroclus wore Achilles's armor and fought in his place.

Hector, thinking he was facing Achilles, killed Patroclus. This brought Achilles back into the battle, seeking revenge for his friend's death. Hector's sense of honor made him fight Achilles, even though he knew that he would die. And Hector did die by Achilles's hand.

See also: Achilles.

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Heimdall/Heimdallr

(Norse)

Heimdall was the Norse god of light. He was fair of face and had shining golden teeth. He was sometimes called Guillintani, or Gold Tooth. Heimdall's primary role was as the guardian god who watched over Bifrost, the only entrance to Asgard, the home of Norse deities. Heimdall protected Asgard from invasion, particularly against the gods' main enemies, the giants.

Heimdall was said to be the son of nine mothers. These were either the daughters of Geirrendour the Giant or of Aegir, or nine personified waves. Heimdall was born at the end of the world and raised by the forces of the earth, on seawater and the blood of a boar.

Heimdall required less sleep than a bird, and he could see a hundred miles around him, by night as well as by day. No sound escaped his hearing. Heimdall was able to hear the grass growing and the wool growing on a sheep's back.

Heimdall had a hall on the edge of Asgard called Himinbjorg, or Cliffs of Heaven. His horse was called Gulltop. Heimdall carried a sword and a horn, called Gjallar. Heimdall blew this horn in warning when danger threatened Asgard. The sound of Gjallar would

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announce the start of the final mythic battle, Ragnarok.

Heimdall was also Rig, or Ruler, the god who created the three basic divisions of human society, *thrall* (slaves), *carl* (peasants), and *earl* (noble warriors). Although the story is fragmentary, it was almost certainly in his role as Rig that this god rode out to rescue the Brisingamen. This precious necklace of amber gave the lovely goddess Freya her charms and also victory to whatever army she favored.

The Brisingamen had been stolen by the trickster deity, Loki, who then disguised himself as a seal. But Heimdall was able to track down Loki, fight him, and defeat him in the form of another seal. The precious necklace was returned to Freya.

From that day on, it was said that Heimdall and Loki became bitter enemies. Indeed, at the final conflict of Ragnarok, Heimdall was to fight and kill Loki, though he would then die from his wounds.

See also: Norse Mythology.

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Hel

(Norse)

In Norse mythology, Hel was the ruler of Helheim, or Niflheim, the realm of the dead, which she ruled from her great hall, Elijudnir, home of the dead.

Hel was the youngest child of the trickster god, Loki, and the giant woman Angrboda, or Distress-Bringer. Her older siblings were the savage wolf Fenrir and the serpent Jormungand. The gods abducted Hel and her brothers from Angrboda's hall and cast her into the underworld, where she remained.

Her name means "cover," in the sense of earth covering a grave. Hel was usually described as a horrible figure, half alive and half dead, with a gloomy or grim and foreboding expression. Her face and body were those of a living woman, but her thighs and legs were those of a corpse, mottled and moldering. Alternate descriptions state that one side of her face and body was alive, the other half dead, or one side was a sickly greenish hue and the other dead white.

Hel was sometimes portrayed as a bringer of disease who swept over the land with a broom or a rake. If she used the broom, there would be no survivors, but the openings between the tines of the rake allowed some to live.

Her throne was a deathbed, and her subjects were all those who died of old age, illness, or criminal punishment. (In a warrior society such as that of the ancient Norse, to die of old age or illness rather than in battle was seen as shameful.) Her manservant was Ganglati, and her maid was Ganglot. The bloodthirsty hound Garm guarded the entrance to her home.

Hel was glad to have been given the underworld as her kingdom. In thanks, she gave Odin, the leader of the Aesir, a pair of ravens, Huginn and Muninn. She reigned so powerfully over her realm that when the hero Balder, Odin's beloved son, was killed accidentally, Hel refused to restore him to his parents and the land of the living, proving that even the gods are powerless against death.

Although Hel's realm was dark and utterly cold, her name became associated after the coming of Christianity with the hot, fiery place of Christian punishment.

See also: Death; Erra; Norse Mythology.

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Heqat/Hekat/Heket

(Egyptian)

Heqat was one of many Egyptian deities of fertility and childbirth. She appeared as a frog or a frog-headed woman.

Some texts speak not specifically of Heqat but of frog goddesses. The prodigious fertility of frogs, and their emergence from the waters of the Nile, fostered their use as a symbol for the concept of "repeating life." Amulets and other representations of frogs often, though not always, represent this goddess.

Heqat was associated with the last stages of the flooding of the Nile and, over time, with the last stages of childbirth. Her spouse was the ram-headed creator god, Khnum. In some stories, she helped Khnum to create an individual and the individual's soul (*ka*) on a potter's wheel.

Heqat appeared on certain magical objects, referred to as wands or knives, which were used in rituals to aid childbirth. Later, when the legend of Osiris and Isis developed, it was Heqat who breathed life into the body of their son Horus.

Noreen Doyle

See also: Frogs and Toads; Mother Goddess/Earth Mother.

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Hera

(Greek)

In Greek mythology, Hera, who was called Juno by the Romans, was the queen of the Olympian gods, wife to Zeus, and the revered goddess of marriage and childbirth.

Hera's parents, Cronos and Rhea, were Titans, the race of supreme rulers who were eventually overthrown by Zeus. Hera, along with her siblings, was swallowed at birth by her father. Hera remained alive inside Cronos until she was rescued by Zeus, at which point she aided him in destroying the Titans and claiming Mount Olympus.

Hera is best known as a cuckolded wife in spite of being a powerful goddess in her own right. She flew into rages and took out her anger and wounded feelings on the unfortunate objects of Zeus's affection, as well as on any children that came of his philandering.

Zeus fell in love with the maiden Io, and Hera flew into a jealous rage. To protect Io from Hera's wrath, Zeus turned Io into a heifer. Hera sent Argus, a hundred-eyed giant, to watch over Io. Zeus sent Hermes to rescue Io. The hero tricked the giant into falling asleep and killed him, and Hera took Argus's eyes and put them into the tail of a peacock.

In another myth, Hera transformed the nymph Callisto into a bear that was then nearly slain by her own son. Hera also sent serpents to kill Zeus's illegitimate son Heracles (Hercules). Although the infant survived the attack, she continued to plague his life with hardships.

Hera played a positive role in the story of Jason. She tested him by pretending to be an old woman who needed help crossing a river. When Jason carried her over, she revealed who she was. Hera assisted Jason in his quest to find the legendary Golden Fleece so he could claim his rightful place as ruler of Iolcus from his usurping uncle, who had refused to honor Hera.

Hera was the mother of Hephaestus, god of the forge; Hebe, goddess of youth and health; and Ares, god of war. She is generally portrayed

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as a strong, solemn woman, and her symbols include the peacock, crow, and pomegranate.

For all her negative images in stories, Hera was considered to be so powerful that even Zeus did not want to stand up to her directly. Instead, he resorted to shape-shifting and trickery to consort with his lovers.

Shanti Fader

See also: Mother Goddess/Earth Mother; Zeus.

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Hermes

(Greek)

In Greek mythology, Hermes, called Mercury by the Romans, was the trickster and messenger of the Olympian gods.

Hermes was the son of Zeus and the nymph Maia. Apollo was Hermes's older brother. As a newborn, Hermes stole a herd of Apollo's cattle, covering his tracks by walking backward. When confronted by his understandably angry brother, Hermes defused the situation by giving Apollo a harp that he had crafted out of a turtle shell in exchange for the cattle.

As the messenger of the gods, Hermes acted as a psychopomp, or soul guide, transporting the spirits of the newly dead to the underworld. Hermes is usually portrayed as a slender, athletic youth. His hat and sandals had wings, and he carried a shepherd's staff with two serpents twined around it (the caduceus, now a symbol of the medical profession). Hermes was the patron god of shepherds, travelers, and thieves. He was honored by pillarlike statues called "herms," which were set as road and boundary markers.

In addition to his duties as a messenger, Hermes was often called upon to help the gods and the mortals they protected, using his quick intelligence and charm. He freed Odysseus from the grasp of the sorceress Circe when she turned him and his men into pigs. He helped Odysseus again by convincing the nymph Calypso to allow Odysseus to leave her island and return home. Hermes also helped negotiate Persephone's return from the underworld and guided Orpheus's wife, Eurydice, back after Orpheus failed to rescue her from death.

Hermes was the cleverest of the Greek gods. He was credited with many inventions, including dice, astronomy, the lyre, fire, and the first system of weights and measures.

Shanti Fader

See also: Tasmisus; Tricksters.

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Hervarar Saga

(Swedish)

The thirteenth-century *Hervarar Saga*, a Swedish *fornaldar saga,* or tale of times past, contains elements of fantasy and history. It attempts to link the mythic past and the fourth-century wars between the Goths and the Huns with Swedish royal history. This tale was also used by author J.R.R. Tolkien as source material for his novel *Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955).

The saga centers on the cursed sword Tyrfing, which was forged by the dwarves Dvalin and Durin for king Sigrlami (or Svafrlami) and then cursed by them. The king had caught the two dwarves and told them that if they wished to live, they would forge him a master sword that would bite iron like cloth, never rust, and bring victory in battle for any who wielded it.

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The dwarves did forge such a sword, but they told the king, "May your sword be a man's bane each time it is drawn, and may three vile deeds be done with that sword. It will also be death to your kin." Undeterred by curses, Sigrlami bore Tyrfing in all his battles. But the curse caused him to lose the sword to the berserker warrior Arngrim.

Tyrfing doomed Arngrim as well. The sword went in turn to Arngrim's son, Angantyr. Angantyr died during a fight against the Swedish hero Hjalmar, whose friend Arrow-Odd buried the cursed sword in a barrow together with Angantyr.

Angantyr's daughter, the shield maiden Hervor, retrieved Tyrfing from the barrow and summoned her father's ghost to allow her to claim her inheritance. The curse on the sword seemed to have ended, but this temporary calm was deceptive.

The saga continued with Hervor's son Heidrek, the king of Reidgotaland. The curse on Tyrfing continued, causing a feud between Heidrek's sons Angantyr and Hlod Hlod. Hlod Hlod, who had been aided by the Huns, was defeated and killed. The story of Tyrfing ends with Hlod Hlod's death.

The saga's conclusion shifts from mythology to fact. It traces a direct line from Angantyr, son of Heidrek, through the list of Swedish kings to the historical thirteenth-century King Philip Halstensson.

See also: Epics.

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Hi'iaka

(Hawaiian)

Hi'iaka is a Hawaiian goddess. She was the favorite of her sister Pele, the goddess of fire, the family healer, and the person most likely to be able to reason with Pele.

Hi'iaka's full name is Hi'iaka-i-ka-poli-'o-Pele, which means "Hi'iaka in the bosom of Pele." Her name refers to the fact that she was given to Pele to raise. Some accounts say Hi'iaka was born as an egg that Pele literally tucked into her bosom until it hatched, producing a beautiful girl.

Hi'iaka and Pele had several sisters, all of whom shared the name Hi'iaka followed by a different description. The other sisters always used their full names unless grouped together, as in "the Hi'iaka sisters." Only Hi'iaka-i-ka-poli-'o-Pele individually shortened her name to Hi'iaka.

Hi'iaka lived with her sisters and brothers in the crater of the Kilauea volcano. Hi'iaka became more important after Pele and their family settled in Kilauea caldera. She sometimes tried to soften Pele's anger, usually with limited success.

There also are a few legends in which Hi'iaka takes the central role. Hi'iaka volunteered when Pele wanted someone to bring Lohiau, a young, handsome chief of Kauai, to her home in Kilauea to be Pele's lover or husband. Before she left on her journey, Hi'iaka made Pele swear that she would protect her sacred grove and its inhabitants.

The journey to Kauai and back proved quite perilous. Hi'iaka had to overcome many monsters, demons, ghosts, and other dangers both on land and at sea along the way. But she persevered. She let nothing stop her, not even Lohiau's death—when she found him dead she resurrected him. She brought Lohiau back to Pele, resisting his amorous advances along the way. When Hi'iaka and Lohiau finally returned to Kilauea, they found that Pele, angry over their slow return, had killed one or more of the women she had promised Hi'iaka that she would protect.

One of the women destroyed by Pele was Hi'iaka's friend Hopoe, the dancer who first taught Hi'iaka the hula. Pele had sent lava flows to destroy parts of Puna, including where Hopoe was staying. Pele turned Hopoe

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into a stone that still "danced," shifting easily with the wind and human touch. The magic Pele used prevented Hi'iaka from resurrecting her friend. The stone stayed where it was, shifting and swaying, until eventually an earthquake knocked it over.

When Hi'iaka discovered her sister's betrayal, she accepted Lohiau's embraces. Pele saw this and killed Lohiau. Hi'iaka resurrected him and as many of the dead women as she could save.

In the end, Hi'iaka married Lohiau. Some say she lived with him on Kauai until he died, shunning her sister all the while because she could not forgive Pele for killing Lohiau and her friends.

Anne Elizabeth Baldwin

See also: Pele/Madam Pele.

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Hocus-Pocus

The nonsense word *hocus-pocus* is known most commonly as a term used by magicians to divert the attention of their audience. Storytellers often use the word, especially when telling folktales.

The origin of the term is uncertain. Some scholars claim that hocus-pocus is a corrupted form of the words used in the consecration of the Host during a Latin mass: *Hoc est corpus,* which means "This is my body."

John Tillotson, archbishop of Canterbury between 1691 and 1694, was the first to suggest this connection. This theory cannot be completely trusted, however; Tillotson proposed it in an anti-Catholic sermon, in which he was most likely trying to smear the Roman Catholic doctrine by comparing it to magical trickery. There is another pseudo-Latin possibility, the nonsense phrase *Hax pax max Deus adimax,* which was uttered by magicians.

An early seventeenth-century juggler recorded Hocus-Pocus as his stage name. He used the following phrase of nonsense patter during his act: *Hocus pocus, tontus talontus, vade celeriter jubeo*. The author Thomas Ady of England saw this practice in a darker light than most. In his 1655 book, *A Candle in the Dark; or, A Treatise Concerning the Nature of Witches and Witchcraft,* Ady wrote, "I will speak of one man . . . that went about in King James time . . . who called himself, The Kings Majesties most excellent Hocus Pocus." Ady went on to claim that the nonsense phrase the juggler recited was "a dark composure of words, to blinde the eyes of the beholders, to make his Trick pass . . . without discovery."

After the publication of Ady's book, the term *hocus-pocus* came to mean any juggler or street magician. Gradually, hocus-pocus was used to describe any deception.

By the nineteenth century, the term had been shortened to form the word *hoax*. Today, hocus-pocus means any word or action used to distract someone from what is really going on, particularly when someone is trying to work a hoax.

See also: Abracadabra.

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Hodag

(North American)

The hodag is a creature from the state of Wisconsin that is said to have a bull's head, a back like a dinosaur's, short legs, long

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claws, a spear-tipped tail, the face of a man, and a foul odor. It may have three eyes, though not all accounts agree on this.

The name *hodag* comes from a combination of *horse* and *dog*. The creature, whose pseudo-scientific name is *bovine spiritualis,* is connected with the legend of Paul Bunyan. Paul Bunyan had a blue ox. After the ox died, its body burned for seven years. The hodag emerged from the ashes.

The hodag was supposedly discovered at the end of the nineteenth century by a former forester named Eugene S. Shepard. He had noticed a foul odor and followed it with a group of companions. The trail ended at a cave near Rhinelander, Wisconsin, where the hodag lived. Shepard and his companions captured the creature.

The hodag was displayed for many years at country fairs. The hodag was shown only in dim light, so no one knows whether it was really there or was only a hoax exhibit. It is rumored that Shepard, noting that hodags slept leaning against trees, was also able to catch a female hodag by cutting down the tree against which she leaned. The captive male and this female were successfully bred. The result was thirteen eggs, all of which hatched. Shepard further claimed that he had taught the hodags to perform tricks, which he hoped to show for a profit.

Shepard was the only person to claim to have caught a hodag. But some have alleged to have glimpsed one, or possibly a group of them, sometimes in caves, from Wisconsin to West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee.

For those interested in pursuing the hodag in its original location, each year the town of Rhinelander holds a Hodag Country Festival. In 1964, the Wisconsin Idea Theater hosted a musical by Dave Peterson called *Hodag: A New Musical Based on the Exploits of Gene Shepard, Wisconsin's Greatest Trickster.*

See also: Tall Tales.

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Homer

(Greek)

The legendary Greek poet Homer is credited with writing two great works of literature, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. These works, written in the eighth century B.C.E., were composed in a combination of Ionic and Aeolic Greek.

For centuries, the so-called Homeric question has been argued among scholars: Did a man named Homer really exist, and, if so, was he the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*? Many places claim to be the birthplace of Homer, but the most likely site is Smyrna (modern-day Izmir in Turkey). The only other consistent detail offered about the man is that he was blind.

Today, many scholars agree that there was a poet named Homer who lived before 700 B.C.E. and that he probably did write the *Iliad*. Homer's source material was a product of a centuries-old oral tradition, but the work itself was original. The *Odyssey,* however, is different enough in style from the *Iliad* to have been written by a later poet.

Extensive study of the *Iliad* has revealed that many of the details included in this work can be traced as far back as the twelfth century B.C.E., hundreds of years before Homer is supposed to have lived. In the first book of the poem, for example, a boar's-tusk helmet is mentioned. Samples of this headgear have been discovered by modern archaeologists, yet these items had not been used since the twelfth century B.C.E. and would not have been known in Homer's day. During the time Homer lived, however, bards, called rhapsodes, kept the oral tradition alive by reciting stories, poems, and myths in public assemblies or in the courts of kings. Rhapsodes had many centuries' worth of material at their disposal,

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so Homer could very well have heard of the twelfth-century headgear in their tales.

Further evidence supporting Homer's authorship of the *Iliad* includes analysis of the poem's internal structure. For instance, the incident of Agamemnon's embassy to Achilles is preceded by twenty-six days and followed by twenty-six days. Each period of twenty-six days is further divided into episodes of one, nine, one, twelve, and three days, the divisions mirroring one another on either side of the event. Also, the poem's events are often presented symmetrically. A rally of the Achaeans at the beginning of the fourteenth book is balanced against a rally of the Trojans at the end of the book. Within these rallies are further similarities and symmetries. All these devices are not representative of an oral tradition but rather point to the presence of a sole author.

The Greeks in the Classical period (c. 500–300 B.C.E.) viewed Homer as divine and used his characters as models of heroic conduct.

See also: *Iliad; Odyssey.*

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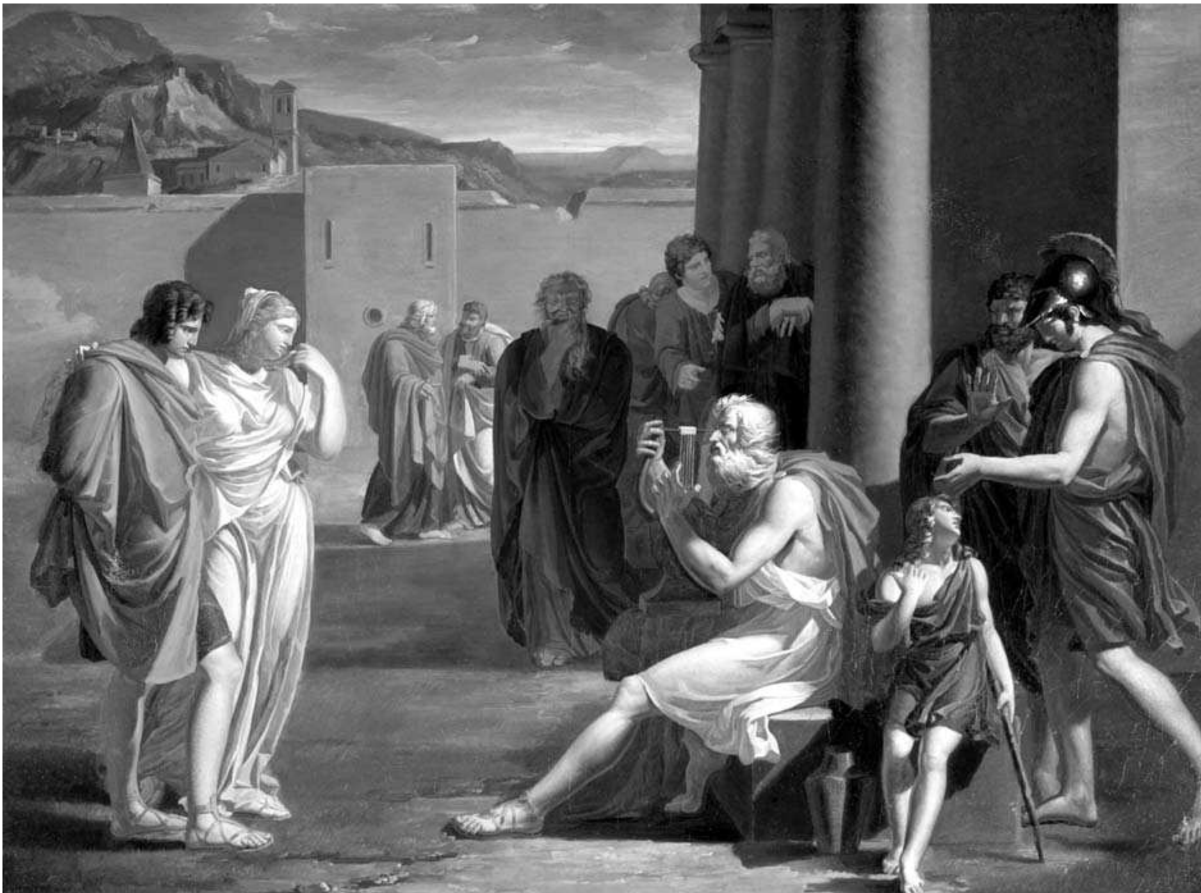
Hook, The

The tale of an escaped maniac with a hook in place of his hand is one of the most widely known urban folktales. The



This romanticized early nineteenth-century oil painting shows the blind poet Homer performing with his lyre for a group of attentive Greeks, ranging from young children to a soldier. *(Attributed to Felix Boisselier/The Bridgeman Art Library/Getty Images)*

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origins of this story date back at least a thousand years.

A common version of this legend is of a teenaged boy and girl parked in a secluded spot late at night. They hear on the car radio that there is a violent, hook-handed prison escapee in the vicinity. The girl insists on being driven home immediately. Once the couple arrives home safely, they find a bloody hook hanging from the passenger-side car door.

The earliest variants of this story date to about the mid-1950s. These may tie in with some real-life (though hookless) murders of teens that occurred in the late 1940s. Fears of such murders and beliefs in the reality of "The Hook" continued through the 1960s. On November 8, 1960, the syndicated columnist Abigail Van Buren, known as Dear Abby, posted a summary of the tale as truth:

> A fellow and his date pulled into their favorite "lovers' lane" to listen to the radio and do a little necking. The music was interrupted by an announcer who said there was an escaped convict in the area [with] a hook instead of a right hand. The couple became frightened and drove away. When the boy took his girl home, he went around to open the car door for her. Then he saw—a hook on the door handle!

There is also a very similar tale that dates to thirteenth-century England. In it, a man was warned not to ride home at night because there was a wild man with a bloody axe murdering people. Of course, the man does exactly what he has been warned not to do. His horse suddenly bolts, the man feels a blow to the saddle, and when he gets home, he finds a bloody axe hanging from the saddle.

The longevity of this legend shows the timelessness and universality of the fears that a good story like this exploits.

See also: Urban Legends.

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Horror

Horror is a genre of fiction that creates fear in the reader or listener.

Horror plots may include the supernatural, the occult, or the darkness within the human soul. But the emphasis is always on unadulterated fear and a sense that dark, unknown forces are at work.

Horror fiction sometimes overlaps with fantasy or science fiction, creating genre hybrids. The combination of horror and fantasy is called dark fantasy. This is usually characterized by a story that stops just short of true horror and its unrelenting fear. The evil character in horror science fiction is usually an alien with demonic abilities. The setting of these tales is often claustrophobic. One such example of horror science fiction is the 1979 movie *Alien,* which was set mostly within the confines of a spaceship.

Classic horror may utilize classic elements, such as the haunted house or the evil child. When it is done right, classic horror overcomes the limits of familiarity to become truly frightening. Shirley Jackson's novel *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) is a case in point.

There are also horror books for children. These have some frightening elements in them but no overly graphic imagery. They are more like campfire tales than adult horror.

Vampires and werewolves are often used in horror novels, but they have become such familiar figures that they are no longer truly frightening. Instead, vampires in particular have undergone a change from monster to tragic hero or antihero.

An extreme form of the horror genre is slasher fiction, in which subtlety is replaced by violence. Sheer disgust at the graphic imagery takes the place of fear in these works.

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See also: Fantasy; Mystery Stories; Science Fiction.

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Horseshoes

The horseshoe is often considered an important symbol of magical power—of good luck or good fortune, in particular. The custom of nailing up old horseshoes as protective amulets or good-luck charms is found throughout Europe, North America, and the Middle East.

The connection often has been made between the horseshoe and the crescent moon. The two symbols have been linked with various goddesses, from the Middle Eastern Astarte to the Greek Artemis, as well as to images of the Virgin Mary, who is sometimes shown standing on or wearing a crescent moon.

The manner in which a horseshoe is hung on a wall varies by region. In North America and parts of Western Europe, such as England and Ireland, the custom is to hang a horseshoe with the points up, so that "the luck won't run out." In the rest of Europe, as well as in the Middle East, a horseshoe is customarily hung with the points down, so that "the luck can pour down" on the owner. Consistent in all traditions is that the horseshoe must have been worn by a horse at some time. The most valuable horseshoe is one that was found in a field or farmyard, as opposed to one that was purchased.

Images of horseshoes are also used for protection against evil or the evil eye. These images can be made of any material. In the Middle East, they are sometimes worked out of blue glass, blue being the color said to ward off the evil eye.

In Mexico, horseshoe charms are decorated with colorful thread and sequins, as well as with prayers or good-luck spells and images of saints. Jewelry in the shape of horseshoes is often seen at racetracks, where it is purchased for good luck.

See also: Motifs.

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Horus

(Egyptian)

The Egyptian falcon god, Horus, existed in several forms, all of them connected with kingship.

Horus is one of the oldest gods, recognizable in imagery dating from the late predynastic period (c. 3100 B.C.E.). He appeared as a falcon or falcon-headed man, wearing any of a number of crowns, some of which were solar in nature. Later imagery showed Horus wearing the kingly headdress, the double crown.

He was also shown as a child, wearing the "sidelock of youth"—the braid that young boys wore—and holding one finger to his mouth. The Greeks mistook this Egyptian version of thumb sucking for the "shushing" gesture, so Horus became a god of silence.

Carved images known as *cippi* show the young Horus grasping malignant creatures and treading on a crocodile. These stone objects were extremely popular for use in healing and as talismans.

In the oldest texts, Horus and his archrival Seth are brothers contending for control of Egypt. Seth steals Horus's eye, and Horus, in turn, steals Seth's semen.

Some sources name the sky goddess, Nut, and the earth god, Geb, as Horus's parents. The cow goddess, Hathor, was either his mother or his wife. The offspring of Horus were Dua-

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One of the oldest Egyptian gods, Horus was depicted as a falcon or falcon-headed man and known as a solar god, a god of silence, and a god of kingship. This bronze figurine is from the Late Period, a time of Greek influence, and dates to c. 600 B.C.E. *(© British Museum/HIP/Art Resource, NY)*

mutef, Qebehsenuef, Imsety, and Hapy. These four were depicted with the head of a jackal, falcon, man, and baboon, respectively, and guarded the internal organs of the deceased.

The myth of the god Osiris, whose cult rose in importance during the late Old Kingdom (c. 2513–2191 B.C.E.), incorporated Horus as Osiris's son. In this myth, the formerly adult and strong Horus is portrayed as the young and vulnerable offspring of Osiris and Isis. The young Horus battles with his older and stronger uncle Seth, with the aid of his mother's cunning. Horus was given two different Greek names: the elder Horus was called Haroeris, and the younger, Harpocrates (Horus-the-Child) or Harsiesis (Horus, Son of Isis).

Horus was also a solar deity whose eyes were the Sun and Moon. In this incarnation, he was called Re-Harakhety (Re-Horus of the Horizon), or Horemakhet (Horus-on-the-Horizon).

The original cult center for Horus was at Hierakonpolis (Nekhen). The rulers of this city would become the earliest kings of Egypt. The Egyptians always equated Horus with the king. The Horus of the Osiris myth was associated exclusively with the living king, because Osiris had become equated with the dead. This cast Horus as the legitimate heir to the throne and the embodiment of lawful succession and triumph. The symbol of the Eye of Horus represented the Egyptian crown.

The Greeks associated Horus with Apollo. Images of the mother goddess Isis and the young Horus may have influenced early Christian images of the Virgin Mary and the Christ Child. It has been suggested that the iconography of Saint George and the dragon also may trace its roots back to Horus.

Noreen Doyle

See also: Culture Heroes.

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Hurston, Zora Neale

(1891–1960)

The American folklorist and writer Zora Neale Hurston is known both for her sympathetic depiction of African American life in the South and for her collections of southern African American folklore.

Hurston was born in Macon County, Alabama, on January 7, 1891. She was the fifth of the eight children of Reverend John Hurston, a Baptist preacher, and Lucy Potts Hurston, a schoolteacher. In 1894, the Hurstons moved to the incorporated town of Eatonville, Florida, where their daughter first developed her keen

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interest in African American folktales, legends, games, and songs.

Hurston attended Morgan State Academy in Baltimore from 1917 to 1918 and Howard Prep School from 1918 to 1919. After spending five years at Howard University in Washington, D.C., Hurston won a scholarship to Barnard College in New York City. She studied anthropology, first at Barnard College and then at Columbia University, under the supervision of Professor Franz Boas.

In February 1927, Hurston received a $1,400 research fellowship that allowed her to do folklore research. She performed her research in Florida, primarily in the Eatonville and Maitland areas, and in New Orleans. In the 1930s, Hurston traveled to the Caribbean and studied Haitian voodoo and Jamaican obeah practices.

Hurston published four novels, a number of essays, and several short stories. The folktales that she collected are now invaluable resources for the study of the relationships between African American and West African storytelling techniques and worldviews. Her works include the novels *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934), and *Moses, Man of a Mountain* (1939) and two folklore collections, *Mules and Men* (1935) and the posthumous *Every Tongue Got to Confess* (2001).

These works have received praise from critics such as Alice Walker and Mary Hellen Washington, who have cited *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as one of the greatest contributions to African American literature. In *The Book of Negro Folklore* (1958), Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps say of Hurston's *Mules and Men* that the book reveals "the richness of Negro folk life," while in *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography* (1977), Robert Hemenway describes *Mules and Men* as "the first popular book about Afro-American folklore ever written by a black scholar."

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Hyenas

Hyenas are featured in the folklore and mythology of many cultures, including those of sub-Saharan Africa and Europe.

In Tanzania, there are beliefs that practitioners of dark magic can transform themselves into hyenas. It is said that such practitioners also keep hyenas as "night cattle" to be ridden after dark. This makes it particularly dangerous to kill a hyena, for its owner may use sorcery to destroy the killer.

Scholars in ancient Greece believed that hyenas were able to change from one sex to the other, though Aristotle refused to accept this notion. It persisted through the Middle Ages, however, at which time the hyena was viewed as a creature obsessed with sex and sexual perversions. These ideas may have arisen from the fact that the genitals of male and female hyenas have a similar appearance.

Medieval Europeans also believed that a lioness would mate with a male hyena, creating a strange hybrid called a leucrotta. The leucrotta, it was said, could imitate human speech and lure travelers into its clutches. This weird belief is probably associated with the hyena's cry, which sounds like maniacal laughter.

Today, some people still believe that hyenas laugh deliberately and that they are cowardly scavengers. Neither belief is true. The hyena is nothing other than a pack animal, a predator that hunts live prey and is capable of driving lions and other predators from their kill.

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Iliad

(Greek)

The *Iliad,* an epic poem that describes events during the last year of the legendary Trojan War, has been called a great Greek epic, a war story, and the first historical novel. Composed in the eighth century B.C.E., it is one of the oldest complete Greek works to have survived to modern times. Authorship of the *Iliad* has been attributed to the blind poet Homer.

The Trojan War was a ten-year conflict between the Achaean Greeks and the Trojans of Asia Minor. In the four centuries between the historical struggle in which Troy was attacked, possibly by Mycenean Greek forces, and Homer's time, many different stories appeared. Homer is thought to have taken these various oral traditions and fused them to make the work his own.

The poem is divided into twenty-four books, but these divisions are not original to the piece. It is thought that a later transcriber divided the work into twenty-four sections, one for each letter in the Greek alphabet.

The Greek gods, including Zeus, chief of the Greek pantheon, and his wife, Hera, are active participants in the war. Many of the main characters are sons of a god or goddess, including the great warrior Achilles, whose mother was the sea goddess, Thetis.

The epic may be based on a real Trojan War, a trade war that may have taken place in the thirteenth century B.C.E. The Trojan War of the *Iliad* was fought because Helen, the beautiful wife of King Menelaus of Sparta, was abducted by Prince Paris, one of the sons of King Priam of Troy. Menelaus's brother, Agamemnon, led an army of Greek heroes to bring Helen back to Sparta. The Trojan War ended with the destruction of Troy.

The first word of the *Iliad,* which takes place during the last fifty days of the war, is *wrath,* and the wrath of Achilles is the main focus of the poem. During the course of the war, Agamemnon, the leader of the Achaeans, took a woman who belonged to Achilles. Achilles was enraged enough at this insult to kill Agamemnon, his leader, but he did not. Instead, Achilles retired from the field, along with his soldiers, the Myrmidons. An embassy from Agamemnon later appealed to Achilles to return, but he refused.

Sometime thereafter, Achilles's cousin and dearest friend Patrocles entered battle wearing Achilles's armour. Patrocles was mistaken for Achilles and killed by Hector, prince of Troy. Grieving and furious, Achilles returned to the war, his strength and rage evident on the battlefield. He faced Hector, his strongest foe and the second-greatest warrior in the battle, and killed him. The poem ends with the return of Hector's body to his parents and his funeral. Achilles's own death, which is foreshadowed in

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In this scene from the *Iliad*, Achilles, in a chariot drawn by his horses Balios and Xanthos, drags the body of the Trojan prince Hector. This carving, which dates to the second century C.E., is located on an outer wall of the Church of Maria Saal in Austria. *(Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)*

the work, and the end of the war are not described in the *Iliad.*

Central to Homer's work is the spirit of *agon,* or contest, as each warrior strives to be the best. The characters of the *Iliad* are trapped in a battle, not only with the enemy, but also by their own expectations about heroic behavior. Achilles could not kill Agamemnon, or go home, and retain his honor. So he chose the only other option, which was to withdraw from the war until the situation changed, waiting to be drawn back into battle. His wait ended with the death of Patrocles. Achilles had no choice but to return to war to avenge his cousin's death.

Homer states that the highest attainment in life is to excel and to be superior to others. The structure of the poem focuses on Achilles's personal journey toward such superiority.

See also: Achilles; Epics; Hector; Homer; Odysseus; *Odyssey;* Trojan War.

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Iliou Persis

(Greek)

The *Iliou Persis,* or the *Sack of Ilion,* is the name of a lost epic of ancient Greece. Ilion refers to the city of Troy. Some scholars believe the epic may have been written by Arktinos of Miletos, a poet of the eighth or seventh century B.C.E.

Although the original work has been lost, it was summarized in a fifth-century work called the *Chrestomatheia*. This anthology may have been written by the Greek philosopher Proclus Diadochus. Diadochus's summary of the *Iliou Persis* gives details of the story of the Trojan War that are not included in Homer's *Iliad.*

Chronologically, the events covered in the *Iliou Persis* occur immediately after the events of the *Iliad* and the *Little Iliad.* The poem opens with the Trojans discussing what to do with the wooden horse that the Greeks had left behind.

Cassandra, the daughter of King Priam of Troy, was a seer. She warned the Trojans that there were Greek warriors inside the horse. But no one heeded her prophesies of doom. The Trojans celebrated their apparent victory and pulled the horse into the city. Only Prince Aineias believed her, and he and his men secretly left Troy.

When night fell, the Greek warriors inside the wooden horse emerged and opened the city gates to allow the rest of the Greek army to enter. The Trojans were caught off guard and were massacred.

The Greeks set fire to the city, and the hero Odysseus killed Troy's King Priam at the

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altar of Zeus. He then killed Astyanax, the infant son of the slain Trojan hero Hector.

Menelaos, king of Sparta, took back his wife, Helen. It was her tryst with Prince Paris of Troy that had started the war.

The Greek warrior Aias dragged Cassandra from sanctuary at the altar of Athena and raped her. For this act, Aias was stoned and driven from Troy by his Greek allies.

The epic ends with the Greeks making a human sacrifice. They offered up Priam's daughter Polyxene at the tomb of Achilles so that the angry spirit of the dead hero would be placated.

See also: Epics; *Iliad;* Trojan War.

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Illuyankas

(Hittite)

Illuyankas was a dangerous Hittite dragon being.

Illuyankas defeated the Hittite storm god, Teshub, in a battle at Kiskilussa, in what is now Turkey. Seeking revenge, Teshub's daughter, Inaras, invited Illuyankas to a feast. Once he was too gorged to move, Illuyankas was killed by the storm god and the other gods.

In another version of the myth, Illuyankas not only defeated Teshub but also stole the storm god's eyes and heart. Illuyankas's daughter married Teshub's son. The son managed to get the stolen eyes and heart back and returned them to his father. Teshub was then able to slay Illuyankas. When Teshub's son sided with the dragon, the storm god killed him as well.

The ritual of Illuyankas's defeat was invoked every spring to symbolize Earth's rebirth.

Ira Spar

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Ilmarinen

(Finnish)

Ilmarinen was one of the main heroes in the epic of Finnish mythology, the *Kalevala.*

Ilmarinen was a wonder-working smith and the trusted friend of the wizard Vainamoinen. Ilmarinen's talent in metalworking was so amazing that he held the title of master smith.

It was for Vainamoinen that Ilmarinen forged the *sampo,* the magic mill that ground corn, money, and salt. This was to help Vainamoinen to win the Maiden of Pohjola, who lived in a cold northern realm.

The sampo was stolen by Louhi, ruler of Pohjola. Ilmarinen and Vainamoinen recovered the sampo, but it was lost in the sea, where it continued to grind out salt forever.

Ilmarinen eventually won the Maiden of Pohjola for himself, but he failed to wed or keep her. Vainamoinen abandoned his courtship. When the hero thereafter failed to win any other mortal bride for himself, the master smith forged a wife out of gold.

In another dispute with Louhi, Ilmarinen took part in freeing the Sun and the Moon, which Louhi had imprisoned.

See also: Ilmatar; Joukahainen; *Kalevala.*

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Ilmatar

(Finnish)

In the Finnish epic the *Kalevala,* Ilmatar was the primal maiden floating upon the primal ocean. Her origin is a mystery.

Ilmatar called on the East Wind and was impregnated by him. But Ilmatar did not give birth, choosing instead to keep the child within her as it grew into the wizard Vainamoinen.

Later, a bird flew by, desperately hunting for a place to lay her eggs, but she found nothing but endless water. Ilmatar pitied the poor bird and bent her knee to give the bird a place to perch. The grateful bird came swooping down, laid half a dozen eggs, plus one made of iron, on Ilmatar's knee, sat upon her clutch, and fell asleep.

The heat of incubation grew hotter and hotter. At last, Ilmatar could not bear the burning on her knee any longer and stretched out her leg. As she did this, seven eggs fell into the sea and broke open.

The seven broken eggs solidified into heaven and Earth. A golden yolk became the Sun, the white of the eggs became the Moon, and the broken bits of shell became the stars. The black yolk of the iron egg became the first thundercloud.

Now Ilmatar set about shaping the land and all that was to exist upon it. Soon Vainamoinen, a grown wizard by this time, entered the world, and Ilmatar vanished from the story.

See also: Ilmarinen; Joukahainen; *Kalevala.*

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Ilya Murometz/Ilya of Murom

(Russian)

Ilya Murometz, or Ilya of Murom, is one of the greatest of the mighty warriors called the *bogatyri* in the Russian epics, the *bylini.*

Ilya was born in the village of Karacharvo near Murom, a Russian city that still exists. The son of a peasant, Ilya was a sickly boy stricken with an illness that took the strength from his legs. He sat helpless for thirty-three years. Then one day, while his parents were out working and he was alone, traveling pilgrims, or, in some versions, an old singer, stopped by the house asking for water. Ilya apologized for his lack of courtesy and explained that he was unable to stand, let alone fetch water.

The visitors shared a drink with Ilya and told him to rise and go forth, declaring that he would become a powerful bogatyr. From that moment forward, Ilya could walk, and he soon became a warrior of extraordinary strength.

Ilya went on to the court of Prince Vladimir of Kiev. There, the prince and the other bogatyri refused to take this newcomer seriously. Ilya set out to prove himself.

He heard of a horrific creature, Solovei Razboynik the Brigand, that had terrible powers. The monster could scream with deadly force or create a ferocious wind that tore trees up by their roots. Solovei Razboynik, also known as Nightingale the Robber, was truly a strange being—half bird and half human. He roosted in a tree near the road to Kiev so that he could stop and challenge all who passed. So far, no one had been able to defeat him.

Ilya rode up to the monster's tree and sternly told his horse not to be afraid. Ilya was able to ignore Solovei Razboynik's terrifying noise, and he calmly drew his bow, shooting and killing the creature. Ilya tied the monster's

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body to his stirrup and brought it to Prince Vladimir.

After this, there were no more doubts about Ilya. He was made Vladimir's chief bogatyr. Ilya further proved his worth by killing Tsar Kalin, who had attacked the land of Rus, which would become Russia.

See also: Bogatyr/Bogatyri; Bylina/Bylini; Culture Heroes; Kievan Cycle.

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Inanna/Ishtar

(Sumerian and Akkadian)

Inanna, known as Ishtar in Akkadian, is a complex deity. The principal female deity in the Sumerian and Akkadian pantheons, Inanna is the goddess of war and fertility. In some stories, she possesses the ability to control storms. Her name may mean "Lady of Heaven."

Inanna is the offspring of the moon god, Nanna, and Ningal, "goddess of the reeds," and some myths mention the sky god, An, as her father. Other traditions name Inanna as the child of Enlil or Enki. Her brothers included the sun god, Utu, and the storm god, Ishkur. She was the sister of Ereshkigal, queen of the netherworld and goddess of death and gloom.

Inanna married Dumuzi, the shepherd king, who is identified with the bud of the date palm, a symbol of fertility and growth. Beginning with the third dynasty of the royal Sumerian city of Ur, at the end of third millennium B.C.E., a ritual was performed that featured a marriage. The ritual included the real or ceremonial marriage of the king, who represented Dumuzi, and a female partner or statue, representing Inanna.

Inanna Challenges An

In this Sumerian myth, Inanna directly challenged An, the sky god, to surrender his temple of E-ana in Uruk. She openly claimed dominion over heaven and Earth. An, the powerful father of the Sumerian pantheon, was unable to counter Inanna's bold move. He is described as anguished and full of grief.

Inanna celebrated her triumph. The E-ana temple, formerly the House of An, became known as "the house that is the place of the lady."

The Myth of Inanna and Enki

In this myth, Inanna visited the wise god Enki, shared beer and sweet wine with him, and challenged him to a competition. The inebriated Enki allowed Inanna to take possession of the *me,* the sacred item that defined all facets of Sumerian life—religion, government, morality, warfare, family and society, art, economy, technology, and crafts. Inanna embarked on the Boat of Heaven to bring her prize to the city of Uruk.

When Enki came out of his drunken state and realized his mistake, he sent beasts and monsters to try to recapture the boat. Inanna and her minister, Ninshubur, evaded many obstacles: the *enkum* (possibly a form of artificial life), the fifty giants of Eridu, the fifty *lahama* (meaning unknown), the great fish, the guardians of Uruk, and the *Id-surangal* beings.

When Inanna finally brought the boat through the Gate of Joy into Uruk, there was a great celebration. She had succeeded in transferring the numerous secrets of civilization to her city.

This Sumerian myth may have its roots in propaganda as a mythological explanation for the city-state of Uruk's sudden rise in stature. Inanna's legendary theft of the gifts of civilization from Enki's temple in Eridu could have provided the perfect justification.

Inanna and Ebih

This Sumerian myth depicts Inanna as the Lady of Battle, armed and deadly. When the

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Ebih mountain range refused to show proper respect toward her, Inanna was outraged. She vowed to destroy the mountains to punish their insolence, using a combination of weapons, storms, and fire.

Before she set out to do so, however, she went before the sky god, An, and told him of her plan. An was hesitant about the punishing attack and told Inanna that she could not destroy the mountains. This only increased her outrage.

Inanna instantly took out her weapons and called upon storms to destroy the mountains, reducing them to nothing and establishing her authority over them. This is almost certainly an attempt to explain the relative flatness of much of the Sumerian (now Iraqi) landscape.

Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld

The story of Inanna's journey to and return from the so-called Land of No Return is perhaps the most familiar of the goddess's tales.

No specific reason is given for her journey. Related texts state that she either was undertaking the journey to save her lover, Dumuzi, from eternal death or had simply set her attention on the netherworld and resolved to journey there.

Inanna prepared for the trip by placing many amulets and jewels on her body. She wore a turban, a wig, small lapis lazuli beads around her neck, egg-shaped beads on her breast, a *pala*-dress, a pectoral ornament, and a golden ring on her hand. She held a lapis lazuli measuring rod, a measuring line, and her seven divine powers in her hand. Before she set out, she informed her minister, Ninshubur, what to do if she failed to return quickly.

At the gate of the netherworld, Neti, the gatekeeper, asked Inanna the reason for her journey. She made up a tale that she was there to visit her sister, Ereshkigal. She planned to pay her respects to Ereshkigal's spouse, Gugulanna, who had recently died.

Ereshkigal was informed of Inanna's arrival and became frightened at the prospect of facing her domineering sister. She told the gatekeeper to lead Inanna through the seven gates and to follow the rites of the netherworld, removing one article of clothing or an amulet from her body at each gate. This process was carried out, so when Inanna finally entered the netherworld, she was completely stripped of her protective amulets and garments. She greeted her sister as one of the dead, crouched and naked.

Despite her lack of protection, Inanna did not hesitate to take Ereshkigal's throne. And so the seven Anuna judges of the netherworld rendered a decision against her, turning Inanna into a corpse and hanging her on a hook. Because she failed to return to Earth, Ninshubur, Inanna's servant, carried out the instructions that her mistress had left: Ninshubur went before Enlil, Nanna, and Enki and begged them to save Inanna.

Enki understood the gravity of the situation, so he fashioned *kur-gara* and *gala-tura* figures, or artificial beings, to sneak past the gates. These figures were to provide sympathy for Ereshkigal and take possession of Inanna's corpse. The figures sprinkled the life-giving plant and the life-giving water upon the dead goddess, which brought her back to life. Inanna was now ready to make her ascent from the Land of No Return.

Before Inanna left, however, the seven Anuna gods stopped her, demanding that she provide a substitute for herself, since no one was permitted to leave the netherworld without penalty. Demons escorted Inanna out, and together they began the search for a substitute. After sparing several possible victims, the demons came upon Inanna's husband, Dumuzi, who was seated on his throne, festively dressed. Furious that her husband was not in mourning for her, the goddess allowed the demons to take him as her substitute to the netherworld.

Once Dumuzi descended to the Land of No Return, Inanna showed some remorse for having damned her husband. The narrative

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concludes with a fragmentary section about Inanna approaching Dumuzi's sister, Geshtinana, and asking her to take her brother's place in the netherworld for half of each year.

Inanna's descent has been interpreted as describing a ritual journey of a cult figure of Inanna from the E-ana in Uruk to the city of Kutha, home of the gods of the underworld.

Inanna as Supporting Character

In addition to the myths in which she is the protagonist, Inanna also plays a significant role in two of the Sumerian myths of Gilgamesh. In *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld,* Gilgamesh cuts down a demon-infested tree for the goddess. In *Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven,* Inanna tried to seduce Gilgamesh. Inanna was rebuffed by Gilgamesh, which eventually led to the death of Gilgamesh's companion, Enkidu, and Gilgamesh's quest for immortality.

Many of the themes in the Sumerian stories also appear in Akkadian texts dating from the end of the second millennium B.C.E. Inanna, now with the Semitic name Ishtar, was still a goddess of sex and procreation, as well as a goddess of war. She was also identified with the planet Venus. As Ishtar, the goddess was associated with many other gods and goddesses in the ancient Near East, including the South Arabian male deity Athtar and the Syrian goddess Astarte, also known as Ashtoreth in the Bible.

Jeff Doolittle

See also: Aphrodite; Bull of Heaven; Dumuzi; Gilgamesh; Mother Goddess/Earth Mother; *Retelling: Inanna's Descent to the Underworld.*

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Inaras

(Hittite)

Inaras was the Hittite goddess of wild animals and a daughter of the storm god, Teshub.

When her father was defeated by the dragon Illuyankas, Inaras sought revenge. She set up a feast and recruited the mortal man Hupasiayas of Zigaratta, taking him as a lover and erasing his memories of his wife and children. Inaras lured Illuyankas and his children to the feast; once they were gorged on food, Inaras had Hupasiayas tie them up. This plot resulted in the storm god's victory over Illuyankas.

Inaras gave Hupasiayas a cliffside house, warning him never to look out the window. He broke the prohibition and saw his wife and children, instantly remembering them. He begged to be allowed to go home. What happened to Hupasiayas and his family after that is unknown.

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Inca Mythology

The Inca Empire was a highly developed civilization that ruled much of western South America. The empire extended from Peru to Chile and ruled from the fifteenth century until the Spanish arrived in 1532.

Major deities and mythical places and beings are presented here with the intention of giving storytellers a starting place for further research and telling of Incan tales.

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Deities

Viracocha was the supreme god of the Inca people. He was the creator of the world and of humankind. His wife, Mama Cocha (Sea Mother), was the goddess of the sea.

Viracocha's son was Inti, the Inca sun god and ancestor, who was portrayed as a golden sun disk with a human face. With his consort Mama Quilla, Inti sired the legendary first Inca Manco Capac I. The ruling Inca was considered to be the representative of Inti on Earth. Mama Quills (Mother Moon or Golden Mother) was the moon goddess. She oversaw marriages, the calendar, and feast days.

Pachacamac was a son of Inti. He was a creator deity that predated Inca religion and was worshipped in the city named for him. Pachacamac is said to have created the first man and woman, but he forgot to provide them with food. When the man died, the woman accused Pachacamac of neglect, whereupon he made her fertile, and she bore a son. The god killed the son and cut the corpse in pieces. From these pieces grew the various fruits and vegetables.

A second son, called Vichama, escaped Pachacamac, so the god slew the mother. Vichama avenged his mother's death by driving Pachacamac into the sea. He took further revenge by turning the humans who had been created by Pachacamac into rocks and islands. Afterward, Vichama hatched three eggs, from which a new race of humans was born.

Another son of Inti was Kon, the rain god and god of the southern wind. He and his brother battled Pachacamac. Whenever Pachacamac drove Kon back to the north, Kon would take the rains along with him and cause drought.

Other Incan deities included Cocomama, or Mama Coca, who was the goddess of the hearth and of joy. She was portrayed as the coca plant. Chasca was the goddess of dawn and twilight, and the protector of virgins and young girls. Mama Allpa was the harvest and earth goddess. She was usually portrayed with many breasts. Zaramama, or Mamazara, was the goddess of grain, said to be incarnated in strangely shaped ears of corn.

Apotequil, or Apocatequil, was the goddess of lightning, while Manco Camac was the sun god and god of fire, and brother of Pachacamac. Supay was the god of death and lord of the Incan underworld.

Places and Things

Ono Pacakoti was the great flood of Incan myth, sent by Viracocha to destroy the race of giants he had created. He saved only two to assist him in re-creating the world and a new race of people.

Hanan Pacha (higher world) was the Inca heaven. Only the souls of the just could reach it, crossing over a narrow bridge woven from hair.

Uca Pacha was the lower world, the underworld at the center of the earth. A cold,

Viracocha was the Inca people's supreme god and creation deity. The blocky shape and square eyes of this statue, originally from Tiahuanaco, Bolivia, are typical of Incan imagery. *(Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY)*

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dark place, it housed the eternally hungry souls of the damned.

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Indian Storytelling

India is a rich land of storytelling, with an amazing variety of tales and techniques. In family settings, folktales of humanlike gods, trickster tales of characters such as Tenali Raman and Birbal, or animal fables might be shared. Festivals and rituals may call for telling grand epics, such as *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata,* or for sharing stories of regional gods and heroes.

Indian storytelling also often takes place in temples or in the streets or village squares, where wandering tellers perform long tales of devotion. Visual props, such as intricately painted scrolls, are used as aids in traditional storytelling.

Rajasthan

In the North Indian state of Rajasthan, intricately painted *par* scrolls are set up by the *bhopa,* or tellers, who then weave nightlong tales. Wearing a red turban and stamping feet ringed with bells, the bhopa sings, speaks, and bows his fiddle. As he discourses, his wife illuminates the various story scenes with an oil lamp. A younger son often attends, actively learning a style that will be carried on in future generations. Two epics of legendary regional heroes Pabuji and Devnarayan are especially popular in this form.

Another painted marvel in Rajasthan is an ingenious storytelling box, the *kavad*. This prop has a number of door panels painted in vivid colors, which unfold to share stories of the gods. Modern adaptations of the kavad have been made by the Indian Ministry of Culture and at the children's cultural center in Delhi, the Bal Bhavan. These modern kavad are used as teaching tools in rural areas.

West Bengal

In West Bengal state, a long vertical scroll, the *pata,* is used to accompany singing tellers, who share stories in homes or at funerals and other functions. The vividly painted scrolls, usually from 12 to 16 feet (3 to 5 meters) long and between 1 and 2 feet (less than 1 meter) wide, feature story scenes aligned as vertical panels. The teller sings with a forceful voice as he unwinds the scroll slowly to tell the tale.

Stories told using a pata are often from the lives of Rama or Krishna, of the great goddess Durga and the snake goddess Manasa, or of the god of death, Yama. The tradition also incorporates newer stories about social issues, such as dowry burning, accidents, and history. Stories of Indira Gandhi's life and even Hiroshima are told using a pata.

The storytellers, called *patua,* struggle to keep this art form alive by trying to attract talented young men to the practice. Unfortunately, many of these prospective storytellers prefer the security of a factory job.

Andhra Pradesh

In Andhra Pradesh, a South Indian state known for its rapidly growing computer industry, some tellers use a long, wide vertical scroll, called a *padam*. The scroll, often painted on a background of rich red, illustrates the Hindu myths. It is suspended behind the teller, who, with the help of several musicians, tells the tale in a dramatic style. The stories often come from oral versions of the epics *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata* in Telegu, the language of the area.

Smaller pictures, usually painted back to back on heavyweight paper, portray the same epics in Maharashtra state, in the *chitrakatha* style. A teller sits with the cards leaning against him as he tells a tale accompanied by

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a musician with a stringed instrument. The form has lost popularity, however, and the pictures are found most often in museums.

Another storytelling form, *kirtan,* has long been popular in Andhra Pradesh. A stirring, devotional mixture of song and dramatic narrative, this genre attracts audiences of hundreds. The onlookers eagerly join in religious chants that are intertwined with the stories of gods, saints, and devotees.

The practitioners of kirtan, called *kirtankars,* use large gestures, elegant hand movements, and voices full of feeling and power to inspire their audiences. Drums and harmonium keyboards are the most common instruments used, and musicians will play as the teller tells or during breaks, using a variety of classical and folk music patterns.

The *burra katha* tellers spread news and tales. One group, the popular Nittala Brothers, was formed in 1947 to tell rural listeners the news of Mahatma Gandhi's death. Most of the many burra katha troupes have three members: a main teller, an assistant who adds questions and asides to move the story along, and a drummer who plays the *burra* drum.

The burra katha art form seemed about to fade away until, at the start of the twentieth century, the Communist Party realized that it could use it to reach the rural masses by adding political content to the stories. Today, information about family planning, farming methods, or elections often is woven into a frame story relating historic or mythic content.

South India

Several centuries ago, the kirtan form of storytelling traveled to South India and evolved into the sophisticated *Harikatha* style. Found in temples, and marriage halls today, the form appeals largely to older listeners.

Harikatha bhagavatars, as the practitioners of this form are known, generally are men who possess natural talent that has been enhanced by years of practice and enriched by devotion. The training required is rigorous. Tellers should speak several Indian languages, be able to quote thousands of religious verses, know the major epics and devotional stories, and be able to sing in classical as well as folk styles. Beyond that, they should have dramatic ability and relate well to an audience. Finally, since the art is rich in the use of small side stories, the bhagavatar must constantly find anecdotes from the news and daily life to sprinkle into his telling.

Villupattu

At the southern tip of India, the ballads of the *villupattu* tellers communicate legends of regional heroes and spirits, deities, and the epics. Although the villupattu tellers perform largely for temple festivals, some also use their talent to spread messages about AIDS, rural sanitation, nutrition, literacy, current events, and more to audiences in colleges, public schools, and banks, and at political rallies.

The villupattu troupe usually is made up of seven players, most of whom play percussion instruments. They sing and make comments to accompany the lead storyteller, who plays the *vil,* a large bow strung with bells that gives the form its name.

Kerala

In Kerala state, stories are shared through *Chakyar kuttu* or *ottan thullal.* Chakyar kuttu, performed only in temples, is the older of the two forms, with a sophisticated delivery, difficult language, and a pace that allows for slow, intricate embroidery of story verses. In this style, a teller is allowed to insult his listeners, regardless of their rank, during the performance.

Many years ago, it is said that a teller wished to warn the raja about his foolish ministers. Thus, when the monkey Hanuman jumped from rock to rock in the story, the teller pointed to each of the ministers' heads as he said, "And Hanuman jumped from empty spot to empty spot to empty spot." In today's performances, temple priests or audience members may be chosen as targets.

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Another legendary performer was a *Chakyar,* an upper-caste Hindu performer, who lived more than 200 years ago. He insulted his drummer, Kunchan Nambiar, who had either fallen asleep or missed a beat. After the scolding, the drummer went home mad enough to write all night, thus creating a new storytelling form, *ottan thullal.*

The next evening, opposite the Chakyar kuttu performance, this vibrant new style appeared. It was an immediate hit—the teller was more active, the music livelier, the language easier to understand, and the stories full of satire and social comment. Stories of the gods were told, but they were the gods of folktales—earthy gods who came to Kerala and often had human characteristics. The audience abandoned the sophisticated Chakyar, so the drummer had his revenge. Today, both forms are taught in regional arts institutes and both are still performed, but ottan thullal remains more popular.

Kerala also is known for its active Communist Party, and so it is no surprise that one storytelling form, *kathaprasangam,* frequently includes tales by Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky. This secular style started in the twentieth century to popularize local Malayalam literature and to challenge societal problems of caste, corruption, and inequality. One of the most popular tellers, V. Sambasivam, described the style as "an operation to purify the minds of the audience."

Indian Storytelling Today

There are hundreds of forms of Indian storytelling. There are bards who travel from place to place and others who perform seasonally, using a variety of stringed or percussive instruments. Most of the epics they share are of regional gods and goddesses.

At times, local heroes become the subjects of popular ballads. Regional identities are often strengthened through the repetition of these familiar stories, and most stories remain available only in the oral tradition.

Many individuals and organizations work to keep traditional storytelling alive in India. Scholars and artists work in university folklore departments as well as in national and local arts academies to teach young people about the various genres. The National Folklore Support Center and Dakshina Chitra arts center and museum have been established in South India to further awareness of this rich tradition.

With the gradual breakup of the extended family in India, opportunities for storytelling in the home are fading. When storytelling family members, such as grandmothers, are not available, some parents turn to books to find stories. Certain book publishers and resource centers give storytelling workshops to help parents learn the art of telling tales, while bookstores carry locally produced volumes of folktales. Recordings of folktales and of Harikatha and devotional storytelling are also available. Traditional storytelling programs are broadcasted on All India Radio and on television.

Indian storytellers deliver a great deal of important information. Their stories rally audiences to vote, urge rural development, encourage devotion, preserve heritage, teach, and inspire. Political messages, the freedom struggle, the basics of rural sanitation, the great epics, and modern stories, as well as tales of heroes, tricksters, and fools, are all shared through the power and skill of these talented individuals.

Cathy Spagnoli

See also: *Panchatantra.*

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Insects

There are estimated to be ten quintillion insects alive in the world, an almost unimaginably large number, and possibly as many as thirty million species. Myths and folklore about insects also are found worldwide.

Beetles

Beetles can be found on every continent except Antarctica in a wide variety of species. Different types have different myths and folk beliefs attached to them.

Scarab Beetles

In ancient Egypt, the scarab was a symbol of the Sun's cycle. Kephri, or Kephara, god of the rising Sun, was represented as a scarab or a man with the head of a scarab. He was the god of transformations and the constant renewal of life.

Dung beetles are a type of scarab beetle that roll their dung into a ball and roll it back to the burrow. The Egyptians reflected this behavior in portrayals of scarabs carrying solar balls instead of balls of dung. The verb *kheper,* meaning to come into existence, was represented by a hieroglyph of a scarab with legs outstretched.

Buprestid Beetles

The buprestid beetle, commonly known as the jewel beetle, has beautiful iridescent blues, greens, reds, and gold on its carapace. The ancient Egyptians used the jewel beetle as a symbol for the chief god, Osiris.

Bark Beetles

In the mythology of the Tahltan people of British Columbia, the existence of bark beetles, which are actually beetle larvae, came about when a beetle saw how well fed a mosquito was. The bark beetle was told by the secretive mosquito that the blood came from tree bark. From then on, the myth says, all bark beetles hunted for blood in tree trunks.

Stag Beetles

In Greek mythology, Cerambus was a musician who angered the gods and was turned into a beetle. He was a stag beetle, which has curved horns that look something like a Greek lyre.

Deathwatch Beetles

There is nothing actually deadly to people about the deathwatch beetle, which is a woodborer that makes a ticking sound as it hunts for mates. In many cultures, however, the sound made by these beetles is considered a warning of the ending of a life.

Ladybugs

Ladybugs, which are members of the beetle family, are also known as ladybird beetles. They generally are thought to be lucky, particularly if one lands on a person. A darker hue of red and a larger number of spots on a ladybug signifies even greater luck. According to the folk belief, if the luck is to hold, the ladybug must be allowed to fly away on its own.

Cicadas

The Romans viewed the periodic emergence of the cicadas on their regular schedules as symbolic of rebirth. An ancient Roman folktale claims that the cicada was created by the gods to eternally honor a mortal woman's beautiful voice after her death.

In China, the cicada is the symbol in Taoism of the *hsien,* or a soul freeing itself from the body at death. In ancient China, it was customary to place a jade cicada carving on the mouth of the deceased to help the soul free itself.

Mosquitoes

Several indigenous groups of the Pacific Northwest share the belief that mosquitoes were created from the ashes of a cannibal who was incinerated by a young man to avenge the slaying of his family.

To the Mayans of the Yucatán Peninsula, mosquitoes were thought to be spies. It was

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believed that mosquitoes learned all about someone while sucking his or her blood.

Dragonflies

The dragonfly, which is found in most regions of the world in different sizes and colors, is harmless to humans. Despite this, it has a surprisingly bad reputation in folklore.

In English folk belief, the dragonfly was linked with the devil and was given names such as "devil's darning needle." In England and Australia, dragonflies are called horse stingers, even though they do not sting horses—or anything else for that matter.

An early American folk belief claimed that dragonflies were capable of stitching together the mouths, and sometimes the eyes and ears, of children who lied, women who scolded, and men who cursed.

In Italy, dragonflies are known as witches' animals. In China, they are a symbol of summer and of feebleness.

In Japan, dragonflies have more positive connotations. They are symbols of happiness, strength, courage, and success, as well as the spirit of the rice.

Ants

In many nations, including Greece, Mexico, and China, as well as in Western Europe and the United States, the ant is a symbol of industry and teamwork.

In Aesop's fable "The Grasshopper and the Ant," the industrious ants prepared for the winter, and the frivolous grasshopper did not. When winter came, the ants had plenty of food. The grasshopper found itself dying of hunger and realized too late the ants' wisdom in working and planning ahead.

Praying Mantis

In Western Europe, the praying mantis was said to be highly reverent, always saying prayers. A French folk belief said that a praying mantis would direct a lost child home.

In Muslim folktales, a mantis was thought to point toward Mecca when praying. To some of the peoples of South Africa, the praying mantis was thought to bring good luck when it landed on someone and might even restore life to the dead.

In the Appalachian region of the southern United States, praying mantises were believed to blind people.

Butterflies

To the Blackfoot people of the northwestern United States, a butterfly brought dreams. A Blackfoot mother might weave a butterfly charm into her child's hair to ensure sweet sleep and good dreams.

In the beliefs of the Tohono O'odham people of the American Southwest, the creator made the butterfly out of bright colors to give people a symbol of hope. But the creator took away the butterfly's beautiful singing voice so that humans would not be envious.

The Aztec of Mexico thought that the dead could return to their living relatives in the form of butterflies to let them know all was well.

Moths

In some folk cultures of the United States, a large moth—particularly one that is all white or all black—that visits a house is the spirit of a deceased relative.

To the Goajiro of Columbia, if a particularly large, white moth is found in a bedroom, it is the spirit of an ancestor. If the moth becomes troublesome, it can be removed only with the greatest care, or the spirit might take vengeance.

Among the Aymara of Bolivia, a certain rare nocturnal moth was thought to be an omen of death.

See also: Bees.

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Internet Lore/Netlore

The Internet, in its relatively short lifespan, has become an amazing source of material for storytellers. Through services such as e-mail and the World Wide Web, the Internet also has become one of the greatest mediums for the spread of folklore ever envisioned. This phenomenon is commonly known as Netlore.

Internet access is available worldwide, and more than 50 percent of the U.S. population is connected. As a result, folklore, jokelore (humorous and false folklore that includes parody, imitation chain letters, and even "dying child" pleas), and nuisances, such as the false computer virus warning, speed across cyberspace.

Jokelore

Of all the humorous folklore that is produced on the Internet, parodies are particularly widespread. Amateur and professional satirists mock everything from corporations to religion. One such parody was a fake press release that circulated in the late twentieth century, called "Microsoft Buys the Catholic Church":

> VATICAN CITY (AP)—In a joint press conference in St. Peter's Square this morning, Microsoft Corp. and the Vatican announced that the Redmond software giant will acquire the Roman Catholic Church in exchange for an unspecified number of shares of Microsoft common stock. If the deal goes through, it will be the first time a computer software company has acquired a major world religion.

Another parody, circulated toward the end of the Clinton presidency, was entitled "The Ken Starr Trek Report." It substituted Star Trek's Captain Kirk for President Clinton.

Jokes about current events also are common, including such tricky subjects as the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The following is an excerpt from an anti-Taliban satire:

Taliban TV
Mondays

8:00	Husseinfeld
8:30	Mad About Everything
9:00	Monday Night Stoning
9:30	Win Bin Laden's Money
10:00	Eye for an Eye Witness News

This tendency to laugh in the face of horror has long been a coping device for many. But the Internet spreads this dark humor around the world in record time.

Faked Lists

Another popular form of Netlore is that of faked lists. These include humorous job evaluations and pretend tests. An example of a fake job evaluation follows:

Actual Employee Evaluations

1. Since my last report, this employee has reached rock bottom and shows signs of starting to dig.
2. His men would follow him anywhere, but only out of morbid curiosity.
3. This associate is really not so much of a has-been, but more of a definitely won't be.
4. Works well when under constant supervision and cornered like a rat in a trap.
5. He would be out of his depth in a parking lot puddle.
6. This young lady has delusions of adequacy.
7. He sets low personal standards and then consistently fails to achieve them.
8. This employee should go far—and the sooner he starts, the better.
9. This employee is depriving a village somewhere of an idiot.

There also are a plethora of so-called top-ten lists, such as "What I will do if I ever

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become an evil overlord." This particular example lists any number of more than a hundred parodies of fantasy and science fiction clichés. The following is a small sample:

1. My Legions of Terror will have helmets with clear Plexiglas visors, not face-concealing ones.
2. My ventilation ducts will be too small to crawl through.
3. My noble half brother whose throne I usurped will be killed, not kept anonymously imprisoned in a forgotten cell of my dungeon.
4. Shooting is not too good for my enemies.
5. The artifact which is the source of my power will not be kept on the Mountain of Despair beyond the River of Fire guarded by the Dragons of Eternity. It will be in my safe-deposit box. The same applies to the object which is my one weakness.

Scams, such as chain letters and attempts to defraud, and parodies of scams are also common. But perhaps most interesting to storytellers is the way that the Internet has become a rich source of traditional folktales, particularly urban folklore, with stories such as "The Vanishing Hitchhiker" and "The Neiman Marcus Cookie Recipe":

> A woman eating lunch at a Neiman Marcus store asks for their cookie recipe. They tell her it will cost her \$2.50. She agrees, but when she gets her bill, she finds that she had been charged \$250 for the recipe, not the \$2.50 she had expected to pay. As revenge on the store for refusing to reverse the charge, she now provides the recipe for free and exhorts others to pass it along.

This incident, of course, never happened. But that does not stop it from being spread, both in believing and disbelieving versions.

The truth, as the saying goes, never stands in the way of a good story—particularly not an Internet story. This bogus warning of a fake computer virus, recorded here in part, sums it up:

> WASHINGTON, D.C.—The Institute for the Investigation of Irregular Internet Phenomena announced today that many Internet users are becoming infected by a new virus that causes them to believe without question every groundless story, legend, and dire warning that shows up in their inbox or on their browser. The Gullibility Virus, as it is called, apparently makes people believe and forward copies of silly hoaxes relating to cookie recipes, e-mail viruses, taxes on modems, and get-rich-quick schemes.

As the saying goes, "There is a sucker born every minute." People's credulity about what they read and hear on the Internet is as strong—and sometimes as misguided—as their credulity about what they encounter in the outside world. The love of satire, however, also is a human trait, and satire can be found on the Internet as well as in the real world. So a balance may be struck between the ready believers and the merely entertained.

See also: Tall Tales.

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Iroquois Storytelling

The Iroquois are a group of six Native American nations from the northeastern United States that share a common language. The six nations included in the Iroquois Confederacy are the Onondaga, the Oneida, the Mohawk, the Seneca, the Cayuga, and the Tuscarora. The Iroquois are known among

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themselves as the Haudenosaunee, which means "people of the longhouse." Iroquois storytelling was an exclusively oral tradition until fairly recently.

Folklorists collected a wealth of information about Iroquois story and lore between 1875 and 1925. During that time, the culture was changing due to outside influences, but the traditional ways still were remembered and practiced.

Currently, storytelling generally does not occur in the native languages, as most nations have few fluent native-language speakers, so stories are told in English. This may change, however, as there is renewed interest among the Iroquois in their native language and cultural traditions.

Traditional Storytelling

Iroquois tradition states that stories should be told only after the first frost, so storytellers would begin traveling from village to village as winter arrived. Anyone was permitted to be a storyteller, but because these traveling storytellers journeyed in the harsh winter months, tellers usually were vigorously healthy men.

The storyteller carried a bag or pouch with him that contained a variety of items chosen to remind him of stories. A storyteller's pouch might contain such items as animal claws, shells, animal teeth, strings of wampum, dolls, feathers, or bark with hieroglyphs sketched on it.

Storytelling took place in the traditional Iroquois dwelling, called a longhouse, around a central fire. The Iroquois were farming and hunting people, so during the winter there was less work to do. Although they enjoyed some winter games, much time was spent in the longhouse during the cold months, and the people were eager for entertainment. The tales of a traveling storyteller or even those told by a storyteller who lived within the longhouse were a welcome reprieve from the boredom of long winter days.

Iroquois stories cover the entire range of human emotions. The audience might, in the course of an evening's tales, burst into laughter, be stirred by joy, or have the hair rise on the backs of their necks as they listened to an Iroquois ghost or monster story. At the end of the storytelling session, each listener would give a small gift to the teller.

Tobacco has long been associated with storytelling among the Iroquois, and it is said to lift one's words and thoughts to the Creator. Often, a storyteller arrived wearing two pouches, a pouch for his pipe and tobacco and the storytelling pouch described earlier. After many stories had been told and the teller could see that the children were growing weary, the storyteller would take out his pipe and begin to smoke as he gave thanks for the knowledge and ability to tell the stories.

Iroquois tradition specified only two times during the year when stories could be told: during the time after the first frost of autumn and before the last frost of winter or "in the moment." A traditional way of conveying the idea that stories should be told only in the wintertime might be to say that one should not tell stories during the growing season because a little bird might hear the stories, become enthralled, and forget her young in her nest. This is a subtle way, the Iroquois believe, of saying that there are too many duties to perform during the planting and harvest season to spend time listening to stories.

In modern Iroquois communities, many do not honor the old tradition of telling stories at only two times during winter. These people say that stories should be told as the opportunity arises. Telling stories "in the moment" refers to those times when a lesson can be taught to younger members of the tribe through story.

The lessons conveyed by these stories sometimes explain the natural world. Parents might share a story in response to the questions of an inquisitive child, such as how the rabbit got his long ears. Values, or correct behavior, are also taught through stories.

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Wampum

To help recall the details of an important historical story, an Iroquois storyteller might use wampum, which are beads formed from the shells of quahog clams. The beads are woven together on a string, creating a pattern, or are sometimes woven into a belt. The patterns are simple and the symbols are not uniform from wampum to wampum.

Tradition states that the original use of wampum dates back to Hiawatha, who strung some beads together and sang a song to take away the people's grief. Making wampum belts is extremely time-consuming, and so they were made only to commemorate the most important events. To record the addition of the Tuscarora to the Iroquois Confederacy, a wampum belt was made. It had six diamonds on it, and each diamond was said to represent a fire, which in turn represented each of the six nations.

For memorable but less important events, perhaps only a string of wampum would be made. A person, often a chief, as chiefs were both spiritual and political leaders, would be entrusted to remember the events represented in the belt. It would be that chief's job to pass the story on to someone else.

Types of Stories

Stories are of various lengths. Epic stories can take several days to tell. An example of an epic story is the Iroquois creation story. This story was first documented nearly 400 years ago in the missionary texts called the Jesuit *Relations*. More than forty written versions of the creation story exist.

The creation story may take three days to recount. The telling might begin at dawn and go until noon or 3 P.M. and continue the next day, but it would never extend into the night. Tradition dictates that this type of story must be told during daytime hours to represent the time of the positive twin, known as the Creator. If it were to fall later than 3 P.M., it would approach the time of the negative twin, known as Flint.

Other stories that might require extended periods of time to tell include the story of the formation of the Iroquois Confederacy and the story of Ganioda'yo, or Handsome Lake. The latter was a Seneca chief who developed a new religion for the Iroquois in the early nineteenth century. These stories, because of their importance and sacred nature, would be told in the longhouse, sometimes by more than one teller.

Shorter, less important stories could be told during or into the night. These shorter stories are the ones most often told to modern audiences.

The Iroquois storytelling tradition remains vibrant and dynamic today. Although many ancient stories have been lost to time, there is a renewed interest among the Iroquois people in language and story. As a result, new stories have been added to the storytelling tradition. Three areas where there have been notable additions are recent historical events, ghost stories, and the stories of steelworkers, as many Iroquois work in this field.

Efforts have been made by the six nations to preserve their storytelling heritage. The stories of the Haudenosaunee help to define their identity.

Melanie Zimmer

See also: *Retelling: A Creation.*

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Isis

(Egyptian)

Isis is one of the most important goddesses in the Egyptian pantheon. Her role in the cult

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of Osiris extended her sphere of influence far beyond that of the mortal king.

The sky goddess, Nut, gave birth to Isis along with her twin brother, Osiris, and the twins Seth and Nephthys. Isis became the faithful wife of her brother Osiris, the slain god, and an important figure in his resurrection. As Osiris's wife, she acquired roles as both earth and rain goddess. When the Osiris cult absorbed the myth of Horus in the second millennium B.C.E., Isis became the mother of Horus. As such, she was a divine mother and guardian of the mortal king.

Isis and Nephthys were principally responsible for finding the body of the murdered Osiris and achieving his resurrection. This made Isis indispensable in Egyptian funerary beliefs. She was called "great of magic," could cure ailments, and could command those who would trouble the dead to cease.

Isis was also something of a trickster. She desired the magic that knowing the secret name of the sun god, Re, would bring to herself and her son. So Isis fashioned a serpent from the aged sun god's spittle and had it bite him. She then offered to heal the ailing deity if he revealed his true name. Isis also tricked the ferryman and the god Seth in the story of *The Contendings of Horus and Seth.*

Isis usually appeared as a woman, sometimes winged, with a throne, which is the hieroglyphic sign for her name, on her head. She sometimes wore the horns of a cow with the solar disk. Isis and Nephthys sometimes appeared as birds of prey, typically kites, which are small, slim hawks.

Astronomically, Isis is the star Sirius, known to the Egyptians as Soped and to the Greeks as Sothis. When Soped rose on the heel of the constellation Orion, so did the Nile, which renewed the fertility of the land by depositing fresh silt. Isis's tears were said to cause the flood, and a protective amulet made of red jasper, known as the *tyet,* or "knot of Isis," became one of her symbols.

Temples and shrines to Isis existed throughout Egypt, including those in Edfu, Koptos, Memphis, and Philae. In the Roman Empire, temples of Isis were erected as far away as Britain. Her cult became a mystery religion with initiations, secret rites, and the promise of eternal life. Isis became a universal goddess, loving and beloved, creator and redeemer. Her cult remained active at Philae until the seventh century C.E. Images of Isis and the young Horus may well have influenced Christian images of the Virgin Mary and the Christ child.

Noreen Doyle

See also: Mother Goddess/Earth Mother.

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Ivan/Ivan Tsarevich

(Russian)

Ivan is the main hero of Russian folktales. He is almost always portrayed as either the third son of a peasant family or the third son of a king. In the latter stories, he is called Ivan Tsarevich, which means "tsar's son." In folk tradition, the third son or daughter is often the folktale's protagonist and the victor. Ivan is also one of the most common Russian names. This character is generally seen as a Russian everyman.

The friends and foes of Ivan Tsarevich are often mythic figures, from magical animals to deathless beings. Perhaps the most famous folktale featuring Ivan Tsarevich as the protagonist is "Prince Ivan, the Firebird, and the Great Gray Wolf." In this story, Ivan Tsarevich was aided by a magical wolf as he captured the firebird and won the hand of a beautiful tsarina. The firebird inspired Igor Stravinsky's ballet of the same name.

In another famous tale, part of which was also used by Stravinsky in *The Firebird,* Ivan

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Tsarevich married a warrior princess, Maria Morevna, who was kidnapped by the immortal being called Koschei the Deathless. In this tale, the animal helpers were a lion, a bird, and a magical horse that belonged to Baba Yaga. It was on this horse that Ivan Tsarevich defeated Koschei.

Ivan the peasant's son has as many tales as Ivan Tsarevich. One of the best known is the story "The Little Humpbacked Horse," in which a magical, talking horse helped Ivan to become a hero and marry the princess he loved.

See also: Motifs.

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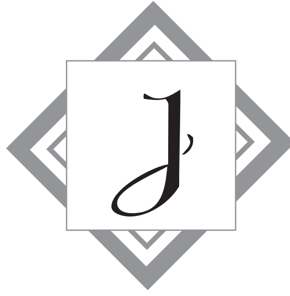

Jackalope

(North American)

The jackalope, also known as the deer-bunny, is said to be an antlered species of rabbit, a weird cross between an antelope or pygmy deer and a predatory jackrabbit, that lives in the American Southwest.

The jackalope is an invention of relatively modern American folklore and is the perfect creation for a storyteller who likes to tell tall tales. The first to tell of the jackalope, or at least the first to popularize the phenomenon, was Douglas Herrick, a taxidermist who started selling mounted jackalope heads in his native Douglas, Wyoming, in the 1930s. Around the same time, jackalope postcards could be found in circulation. The town of Douglas is the official jackalope capital of America; it claims to be the location of the first sighting in 1829. On Jackalope Day, held in Douglas on June 31 of each year, jackalope hunting licenses are available.

The jackalope is said to be highly aggressive, using its antlers as weapons. It is also known by its pseudo-scientific name, *Lepus-temperamentalus,* and the nickname "warrior rabbit." The jackalope is able to imitate human speech and song to the extent that a hunted jackalope can throw off its pursuers by mimicking the hunters' voices. Jackalopes also have been known to sing along with cowboys and others.

The best way to catch a jackalope is not to chase it but to leave whiskey out for it. The animal will drink until intoxicated and then can easily be caught. Even so, they are fierce fighters, and none have ever been captured alive.

The main reason to catch a jackalope is for its milk. Some sources say that the milk is medicinal, while others claim that it has aphrodisiac properties. Regardless, it is very dangerous to try to milk a jackalope, even when it is sound asleep, belly up.

President Ronald Reagan had a jackalope head on a wall at his ranch and claimed he had hunted the creature himself. Jackalopes have been featured in animated television series such as *Pinky and the Brain.* Science fiction and fantasy author Alan Dean Foster penned a story simply titled "Jackalope" in 1989. And in 2004, Pixar Animation Studios released a short feature called "Boundin'," which starred a jackalope.

The evolution of the jackalope may have come about because rabbits are sometimes infected with a virus called *Shope papillomavirus* that can cause growths that look like horns. There also have been reported sightings of jackalope-type creatures in Europe: the *wolperdinger* of Germany and the *skvader* of Sweden. The skvader, however, has wings rather than horns. In Swedish, skvader is a colloquial term for a bad compromise.

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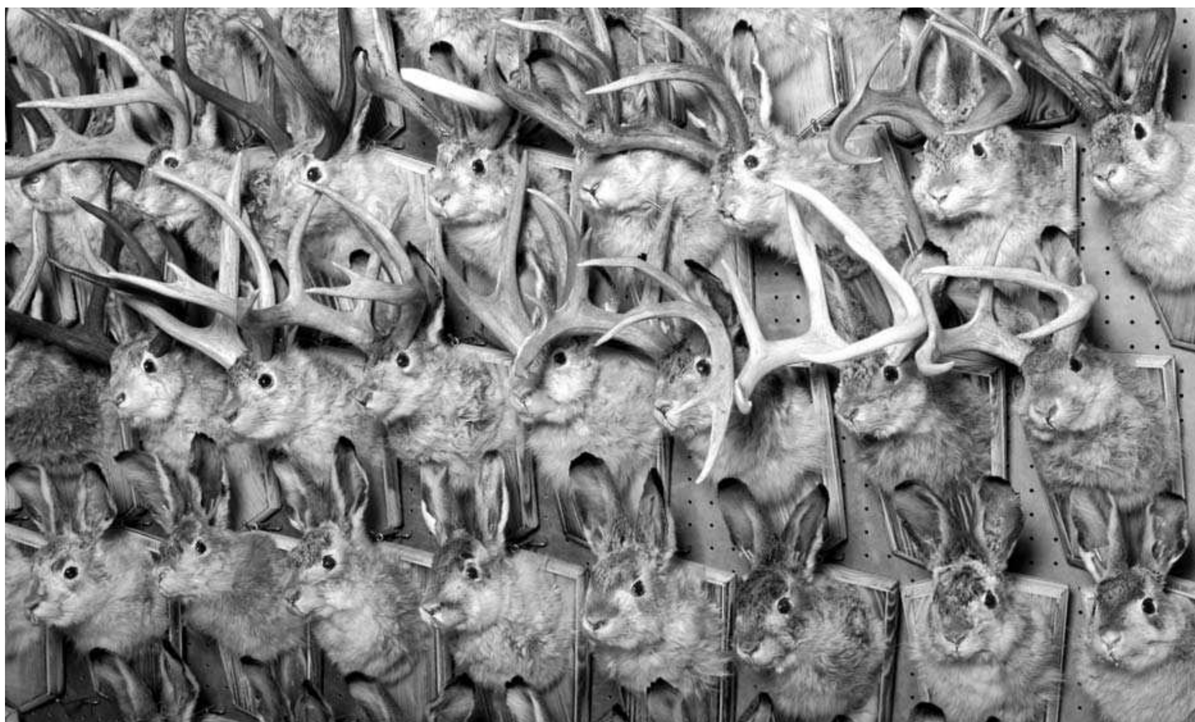

A jackalope is an American mythical creature that is a cross between a jackrabbit and an antelope or pygmy deer. In this store in Piedmont, South Dakota, racks of jackalope plaques are hung on display, above a row of jackrabbit plaques. *(Markus Erk/America 24-7/Getty Images)*

See also: Urban Legends.

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Japanese Storytelling

Storytellers in Japan walk a green and ancient land. The stories they tell are rich and varied, from the poignant sounds of the old epics to the fast-paced humor of the *rakugo* storytelling style.

Rakugo

Rakugo is a theatrical storytelling form that has been popular in Japan since the sixteenth century. The form conveys humor through wordplay and mime.

Long years of training under a master teller help the young *hanashika,* the usually male storyteller of this form, to polish skills of timing, improvisation, and characterization. With a wave of his fan, a tilt of his head, or a change of pose and voice, an accomplished rakugo teller can create multiple characters and convincingly portray them conversing. Rakugo stories poke fun at human foibles. They bring to life the rogues, fools, prostitutes, and merchants of the Edo period, which spanned the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, or get laughs with modern stories of robots and baseball.

To learn rakugo, the student serves as an assistant, studying his teacher's stories and delivery. After the apprentice knows as many as thirty stories, has studied for some thirteen years, and has passed a performance test, he is able to perform on his own. Slowly, he develops his own style and, perhaps, his own material. Those who excel are eventually

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recognized as masters, who then train young apprentices.

This storytelling form is presented on television and in large concert halls, but fans still prefer to experience it in the more intimate *yose,* a vaudeville-type theater. Sprinkled among various acts—magicians, jugglers, singers, and comedy teams—is the hanashika. He kneels on a cushion in a dark traditional robe and performs short stories rich in puns and satire, often holding a fan and a handkerchief as props.

Tokyo and Osaka boast yose theaters and concert halls that feature rakugo. Throughout Japan, amateur rakugo clubs meet to practice this witty, skillful storytelling style.

Kodan and Biwa Hoshi

Kodan storytelling is also known as *koshaku,* which means "the reading and explanation of religious texts." Kodan originally consisted of somber readings and religious lectures. By the late eighteenth century, it had evolved into a type of entertainment.

Crowds filled small theaters as the storyteller related heroic war tales and sentimental stories. The storyteller, whose only prop was a block of wood, alternated between explaining the story and playing different roles. The entertainment often ended with a fast-paced fight scene. Unfortunately, these types of stories no longer attract younger listeners, and the art form is dying out.

Another Japanese storytelling form rarely seen today is *biwa hoshi.* In medieval Japan, people in cities and villages waited eagerly for the traveling storytellers who brought epic tales of war to life. One such tale is *Heike Monogatari,* or *The Tale of the Heike,* a popular recounting of the twelfth-century battle for control of Japan. Often the teller was a monk, usually blind, who traveled from town to town relating scenes from these powerful stories. The monk would accompany himself on a *biwa,* a Japanese lute. Today, these tales might come to life in books or on television, but rarely through a storyteller's voice.

Koen Dowa

The *koen dowa* style of storytelling was created in 1896 by the author Sazanami Iwaya (1879–1933), who published nearly fifty volumes of traditional Japanese tales. During a visit to an elementary school in 1896, the principal advised Iwaya to share his stories aloud with students, rather than just writing them down. And so koen dowa, or voiced literature, was born.

Within two years, Iwaya had become a professional storyteller. His book, *How to Tell Stories* (1903), urges tellers to interest the audience and give them valuable impressions to take home with them.

Takehiko Kurushima was also known for telling in this style. Kurushima, one of Iwaya's followers, traveled throughout Japan in a caravan and told original stories, Bible tales, and Western and Eastern fairy tales. Other expressive koen dowa tellers could be found in the streets, parks, and schools of Japan during the early twentieth century.

World War II significantly altered this style of storytelling, as the tales became more militaristic and didactic. When the war that killed almost 2 million Japanese was finished, koen dowa, too, had suffered. The tellers had become too far removed from their audiences and too linked to bitter war memories. As a result, only a small association remains to research this once popular form.

Gaito Kamishibai

Gaito kamishibai is outdoor paper theater. This form of storytelling was popular in the early twentieth century, reaching its peak between 1930 and 1960. This lively art form featured male tellers who were skilled in the use of voice, gesture, and improvisation. They told stories using sets of illustrated cards, called *kamishibai,* to aid in the telling. In this form's heyday, some 30,000 players worked in Tokyo and about 10,000 worked in Osaka. Tellers told tales from tiny stages mounted to the backs of their bicycles. They earned income by selling candy and snacks to their audience.

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Kamishibai cards were hand painted by talented, otherwise unemployed artists. Each card in the standard set of ten measured roughly 12 by 14 inches (30 by 36 centimeters). Popular stories could take up thirty or more sets of cards, and the most popular tale, about the comic character Chon-Chan, used more than 5,000 sets. Funny stories, tales of samurai, original science fiction, and tales of superheroes—such as Dr. Glove, who had invincible electric fighting gloves—were crowd pleasers.

The men and women who share gaito kamishibai today often perform in libraries and homes, rather than on the street. Bright, printed kamishibai cards, which first appeared in the 1930s, are found in most modern libraries. These packaged sets tell complete stories, from Japan and the West, in sequences of twelve to sixteen cards. Each card measures about 12 by 18 inches (30 by 46 centimeters).

Thousands of librarians, volunteers, and children across Japan make their own kamishibai sets, and kamishibai festivals take place in some regions. The cards found at these festivals are often more ornate than the original cards. The cards created by today's kamishibai artists are sometimes very large, up to 4 feet by 6 feet (just over 1 meter by almost 2 meters), may be painted on delicate handmade paper, or may have moving parts made using sticks, strings, or Velcro.

Modern Japanese Storytelling

Storytelling in private homes was once a vital part of Japanese daily life. An agricultural economy allowed for slow evenings when the family gathered around the fireplace. But young listeners were drawn to the cities. Eventually a number of factors, including the advent of television and the pressure of a competitive educational system, further weakened folk telling.

Traditional storytellers today hold to the local words, inflections, and formulas of their regions. Shadings of local color enhance and define each story in this culture that is so sensitive to nuance. Folklore scholars continue to collect tales and encourage the continuation of the oral tradition. Scholars on the northern island of Hokkaido also try to preserve the stories of the Ainu indigenous people.

Japanese storytellers use voice as their primary tool. Character voices and expressive, flexible ranges are common. These may in some way be inspired by the sounds of the *joruri,* the powerful narrative used for the Bunraku puppet plays. The Japanese language is rich in homonyms and wordplay, so sound effects frequently enrich the telling: *gutsu gutsu* for boiling, *pera pera* for gossiping, *sowa sowa* for restlessness, *niya niya* for a certain smile, and so on.

Storytelling is on the rise in Japanese schools and some bookstores, as well as in *bunko* (private libraries) and public libraries. Those who tell these tales in schools, bookstores, bunko, and public libraries range in age from brave teenagers to lively grandmothers. Stories include folktales, modern written books from around the world, and painful stories of war.

These modern-day tellers are a warm, caring group. Their style is often quiet, with hands usually held in the lap or at the sides, little expression in the face, and a voice that is fairly even. Many tellers feel that the story's words alone should convey its images and that too many gestures might distract the listeners.

Many storytellers also light candles to focus attention or use songs, finger plays, and kamishibai. Novices search eagerly for training and seek out tellers such as Matsuoka Kyoko of the Tokyo Children's Library, who has written extensively on storytelling. Kyoko also teaches courses in storytelling. In 2005, he produced a popular paperback series of tales called *Ohanashi No Rosoku* (*Story Candle*).

True stories are told throughout Japan. Tragedies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are shared, as are "strange-but-true" experiences of contemporary society. One of the most respected leaders in this movement is Matsutani Miyoko, a writer and folklore collector. Miyoko's published anthologies of contemporary storytelling material contain tales grouped under common themes, such as stories

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of returned dead, military tales, fake trains, the vanishing hitchhiker, dreams of death come true, fireballs, departed souls, and so on.

There is a special group of true storytellers found in Hiroshima known as the *hibakusha*-active. These are elder survivors of the World War II nuclear bomb attack who regularly tell their true war stories in schools and at Hiroshima's Memorial Peace Park. Their words cry of lost parents and children, of ruined health and marriage prospects, of nightmares and strange sicknesses, and of courage and compassion.

Japanese storytelling is a mixture of traditions and styles, some using props, some with music, and some with the teller's words alone. Storytelling material continues to evolve to meet the challenges of a society inundated by increasing options in entertainment and technology. Modern storytellers wisely look to both the past and the future as they try to reach modern listeners and nourish the art of Japanese storytelling.

Cathy Spagnoli

See also: Kamishibai; Yoshitsune.

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Jersey Devil

(American)

The Jersey Devil is, according to folklore, a monster existing in the state of New Jersey, specifically in the relatively wild region known as the Pine Barrens.

The creature's origins date to the eighteenth century. Several reasons are given for its creation, all of which involve Mrs. Leeds, an indigent woman with twelve children, who found out she was to have a thirteenth child.

In one version, Mrs. Leeds exclaimed that she did not wish to bring another child into the world, crying, "Let it be a devil!" Another variation claims that she angered either a clergyman or a gypsy, and so a curse was placed on her unborn child. Others state that she practiced sorcery, and so her child was accursed, or that Mrs. Leeds lay with a British soldier, and her child was cursed for her treason.

All the versions agree that when the child was born it was horribly deformed, indeed looking like a devil, its two feet possibly with hooves. It promptly scrambled up the chimney and out into the woods. There, it fed on what livestock and children it could find, until it was exorcised in 1740. The exorcism's power lasted only a hundred years, whereupon the Jersey Devil was again sighted.

There are reports, albeit sketchy ones, of the devil being seen by townsfolk in 1859, 1873, and 1880. No less a personage than Joseph Bonaparte, brother to Napoleon, claimed to have seen the creature while hunting. At the end of the nineteenth century, a newspaper reported a sighting. Through January 1909, hundreds of incidents were reported.

Then the Jersey Devil disappeared for a while, with only one sighting in 1927. In 1951, however, it returned. Some of the reports clearly were hoaxes, but others terrified some local residents enough for them to organize Jersey Devil hunts.

Stories of the Jersey Devil died down again in the 1960s and never returned to their previous fervor. But local people keep the memory of the Jersey Devil alive. The Jersey Devil even made a television appearance in a 1993 episode of the occult television series *The X-Files*.

At the end of the twentieth century, a New Jersey hockey team was named the Jersey Devils. The name was retained in spite of the objections of a local minister.

See also: Urban Legends.

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Joe Magarac

(American)

A relatively recent culture hero, Joe Magarac is the folkloric and superhuman creation of immigrant steelworkers in and around Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Joe Magarac, a man made of solid steel, is said to have been born in a mountain of iron ore. Making his home on an iron-ore heap near a blast furnace, massive and powerful Joe was able to make 2,000 tons of steel a day, and needed no tools or gloves. He would stir the enormous buckets of molten metal with his bare hands and mold train rails out of iron ingots by simply squeezing them between his mighty fingers.

A local man, Steve Mestrovic, offered the hand of his daughter Mary to the man who could prove himself the strongest. Joe easily won the prize, but regretfully turned down the offer of marriage, saying that a wife would interfere with his work. Joe's end came in true culture-hero fashion. To save his fellow steelworkers from losing their jobs, he sacrificed himself and was melted in a Bessemer converter to become part of the finest steel ever made.

The origin of the Joe Magarac character is unknown, but he was likely created in the first half of the twentieth century. The word *magarac* means jackass or donkey in Croatian. Joe Magarac may have arisen from a local reporter's story (or error) in which the word was accidentally (or deliberately) misunderstood to be the name of a strong steelworker. Or it may have come from the fact that Joe was said to work like a donkey, never stopping to rest.

The image of Joe Magarac was used in a 1949 advertisement for the John Hancock insurance company. He also was featured in a stained-glass panel installed at the international headquarters for the United Steelworkers of America.

See also: Culture Heroes; Tall Tales.

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John Henry

(American)

John Henry, that "steel-driving man," is known to most people as the indomitable African American hero of folk songs. In the original story of John Henry, sung mostly by the working class, he traveled west with the railroads in the nineteenth century.

The story of John Henry was spun into dozens of versions that eventually were sung by people who had never swung a hammer or worked on the railroad. But these people identified with the theme of the common man's struggle against the machine, and "John Henry" became a song of protest against intolerable work conditions.

As is the case with many folk heroes, there actually was a John Henry. He was born a slave who was freed at the end of the American Civil War. John Henry and about a thousand other men went to work between 1870 and 1873 on the construction of Great Bend Tunnel in West Virginia. The C&O railroad paid them $1.25 per day.

It was rough work, and men were injured or killed by silicosis (a respiratory disease), falling rocks, careless blasting, and fights with fellow workers. John Henry and the other steel drivers worked with only hand drills and hammers to drill holes into solid rock, where powder charges were placed. Once a

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blast had broken the rock free, it had to be loaded onto mule-drawn carts and removed from the site.

The speed of drilling depended on the strength of the driver and the speed with which he could swing his hammer. The real John Henry worked on the heading of the tunnel, which was the initial horizontal shaft. This could be extremely dangerous work, since that first shaft could easily collapse. A driller had to be very skilled with a hammer, and John Henry was said to be the only driller who could use two hammers, alternating swings with each hand.

At this point in the story, it becomes difficult to separate the man from the folk hero. It is said that John Henry stood 6 feet (almost 2 meters) tall and weighed about 200 pounds, which would have made him immense by nineteenth-century standards. It is also said that John Henry had a wonderful singing voice, a talent for playing the banjo, and a great appetite for food and work. He has been called the strongest, fastest, most powerful man working on the rails.

One day, a salesman came to camp boasting that his steam-powered machine could outdrill any man. John Henry challenged the claim, and, as one West Virginia version of the folk song states:

John Henry told his captain,
"A man ain't nothin' but a man,
But before I let your steam drill beat
me down,
I'll die with a hammer in my hand,
Lord, Lord!
I'll die with a hammer in my hand."

A race of man against machine took place. John Henry won, but he died soon afterward. The versions of the folk song differ as to the cause of his death. Some claim exhaustion, some claim a stroke, and some claim a heart attack. Whatever the facts, the songs remain a testament to both John Henry and the human spirit.

See also: Culture Heroes.

Source

Summers County Convention and Visitor's Bureau. "John Henry—The Steel Drivin' Man." 2005. http://www.summerscvb.com/johnhenry.cfm.

Johnny Appleseed

(American)

Most people are familiar with the nineteenth-century American folk figure Johnny Appleseed, who wandered westward, sowing apple seeds as he went. The real Johnny Appleseed was John Chapman, a nurseryman born in Leominster, Massachusetts, on September 26, 1774. The man who became known as Johnny Appleseed was not a casual sower of seeds, but a man who saw a real need in the new country for apple trees, and an opportunity to supply farms with seeds and seedlings.

Chapman began his travels toward the end of the eighteenth century, heading to what is now the state of Pennsylvania. In 1797, he established his first apple nursery in Warren County. He eventually owned several tracts of land in the Midwest, particularly in what is now Ohio and Indiana.

Chapman started many nurseries by planting seeds he had bought from Pennsylvania cider mills. He also served as a self-appointed missionary of the Swedenborgian faith, as well as a peacemaker between settlers and indigenous peoples.

But here folklore blurs the facts. Chapman was described as a kind and gentle man, but the folk accounts of Johnny Appleseed add an eccentric costume. He wore a pot for a hat, clothing made of sacking, and no shoes on his feet.

Some stories add a large black wolf as his faithful companion, an animal he had tamed by saving it from a hunter's trap. Another detail that sometimes is added claims that when a rattlesnake tried to bite Appleseed, its fangs

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Johnny Appleseed's real name was John Chapman. A vigorous Massachusetts nurseryman who planted and supplied apple seeds and seedlings, folktales describe him as spreading apple seeds wherever he went. This stylized illustration is by William Gropper (1897–1977). *(Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC/Art Resource, NY)*

could not get through the hard skin of his foot.

John Chapman died on March 18, 1845. Folk accounts claim that he died from the first illness he had ever known in seventy years of life.

See also: Culture Heroes.

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Jongleurs

(French)

Jongleurs were among the various public entertainers who performed across Western Europe during the Middle Ages.

The earliest form of the word *jongleur* is the Latin *jocucator,* which is the source word for the English *jocular.* In French, the Latin word *jocucator* became *joglar,* then *jongleur,* while in English, the terms *joglar* and *jongleur* eventually became *juggler.*

There were two basic types of jongleurs. There were those who were acrobats, jugglers, actors, and street magicians. The church often condemned these performers as being shiftless, thieving, and downright immoral.

The second group of jongleurs was made up of performers who were closer in skills to the more highly honored minstrels and troubadours. These so-called *jongleurs de geste* performed the *chansons de geste*, or songs of great deeds. These were epic poems, either traditional or original, that celebrated the deeds of local or national heroes. Unlike the street performers, jongleurs de geste were considered respectable entertainers.

Jongleurs reached the height of their importance in the thirteenth century but lapsed into decline in the fourteenth. Their various talents were disseminated among new types of performers who focused on a single craft—actors, musicians, and acrobats.

See also: Minstrels; Troubadours.

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Joukahainen

(Finnish)

In the Finnish epic the *Kalevala,* the arrogant and foolish would-be magician Joukahainen challenged the wizard Vainamoinen to a magic duel of song.

The great wizard tried to dissuade Joukahainen, but the boy insisted. Vainamoinen became so angry that he sang Joukahainen most of the way into the earth and nearly killed him. The frantic young man offered a deal: If Vainamoinen would spare Joukahainen's life, he would receive the hand of Joukahainen's sister, Aino, in marriage.

Vainamoinen agreed, pulling Joukahainen out of the earth. But this business arrangement eventually led to tragedy. Aino refused to marry an old man, threw herself into the sea, and drowned.

Joukahainen avenged his sister's death by shooting Vainamoinen's horse, sending the wizard tumbling into the icy seas of Pohjola. Vainamoinen survived.

The *Kalevala* fails to state what happened to Joukahainen after this episode.

See also: *Kalevala.*

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Journey to the West/Monkey

(Chinese)

This epic Chinese fantasy adventure, known by two names—*Journey to the West* and *Monkey*—first appeared during the Ming dynasty toward the end of the sixteenth century. Authorship is traditionally credited to the scholar Wu Cheng'en, although there is no hard proof of his involvement. Loosely based on a historic pilgrimage made by a Buddhist monk to India in the seventh century, this wild adventure remains popular in modern China.

Monkey, or Sun Wukong, is the main character of the story. He was a trickster, the king of a monkey tribe who was not born the usual way, but "from an egg on a mountaintop." He tricked his way into heaven, where he became "Keeper of the Peaches of Immortality." He ate the peaches and played so many tricks that the gods taught him humility by trapping him under a mountain.

Monkey was released when the monk Tripitaka, a pure-spirited and unworldly person, was given a divine command to undertake a pilgrimage to India to recover holy scriptures. Monkey was chosen as one of Tripitaka's comrades and was given the assignment of providing protection for the monk, with the understanding that this would be Monkey's last chance to earn his immortality. This pair recruited two other unlikely cohorts: Sandy, a reformed monster-warrior and former cannibal, and Pigsy, who fought a constant battle with lust of all sorts. Tripitaka rode on a transformed dragon that occasionally took human form.

As the four odd companions set out on their journey to the West, they were constantly under attack from demons, spirits, and monsters. Some of these enemies wanted to stop the holy expedition. Others wanted the immortality they could attain by eating the monk.

The three heroic nonhumans protected their innocent charge and fought off the Iron Fan Princess, the Bull Demon King, spider-women, lion-monsters, and even the White Bone Demon. The latter was such a popular villain in Chinese folk culture that illustrations of the story often show Monkey battling her. (Mao Zedong's vicious widow was nicknamed the White Bone Demon.)

After seven years, the journey and the quest were safely completed. The four travelers returned to the East and received high posts in heaven.

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See also: Epics.

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Jump Tales

Jump tales are scary stories in which the storyteller uses a dramatic pause followed by a sudden loud outburst to get the audience to jump or start out of their seats. Mark Twain was particularly good at telling a jump tale called "The Golden Arm," which never failed to scare audience members.

Following are two classic English-American versions of jump tales.

The Big Toe

A boy was digging at the edge of a garden when he saw a big toe. He tried to pick it up, but it was stuck to something. So he gave it a hard jerk, and it came off in his hands. The boy took the toe to his mother.

"It looks nice and plump," she said. "I'll put it in the soup, and we'll have it for supper."

That night, the boy's father carved the toe into three pieces, and they each had a piece. After supper, they did the dishes. When it got dark, the family went to bed.

The boy fell asleep almost at once. But in the middle of the night, a sound awakened him. It was something out in the street. It was a voice, and it was calling to him.

"Where is my to-o-o-o-o-e?"

When the boy heard that, he got very scared. But he thought, "It doesn't know where I am. It will never find me."

Then he heard the voice once more. Only now, it was closer.

"Where is my to-o-o-o-e?"

The boy pulled the blankets over his head and closed his eyes. "I'll go to sleep," he thought. "When I wake up, it will be gone."

But soon he heard the back door open, and again he heard the voice.

"Where is my to-o-o-o-e?"

Then the boy heard footsteps moving through the kitchen into the dining room, into the living room, and into the front hall.

Then slowly, the footsteps came up the stairs. Closer and closer they came. Soon they were in the upstairs hall. Now they were outside his bedroom door.

"Where is my to-o-o-o-e?"

The bedroom door opened. Shaking with fear, the boy listened as the footsteps slowly moved through the dark toward his bed. Then they stopped.

"Where is my t-o-o-o-e?"

"YOU'VE GOT IT!"

The boy was never seen again.

The Teeny-Tiny Woman

Once upon a time there was a teeny-tiny woman who lived in a teeny-tiny house in a teeny-tiny village. Now one day, the teeny-tiny woman put on her teeny-tiny bonnet, and went out of her teeny-tiny house to take a teeny-tiny walk.

When the teeny-tiny woman had gone a teeny-tiny way, she came to a teeny-tiny gate. So the teeny-tiny woman opened the teeny-tiny gate, and went into a teeny-tiny churchyard.

When the teeny-tiny woman had gotten into the teeny-tiny churchyard, she saw a teeny-tiny bone on a teeny-tiny grave. And the teeny-tiny woman said to her teeny-tiny self, "This teeny-tiny bone will make me some teeny-tiny soup for my teeny-tiny supper." So the teeny-tiny woman put the teeny-tiny bone into her teeny-tiny pocket and went home to her teeny-tiny house.

Now, when the teeny-tiny woman got home to her teeny-tiny house, she was a teeny-tiny bit tired. So she went up her teeny-tiny stairs to her teeny-tiny bed, and put the teeny-tiny bone into a teeny-tiny cupboard.

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And when the teeny-tiny woman had been to sleep a teeny-tiny time, she was awakened by a teeny-tiny voice from the teeny-tiny cupboard that said, "Give me my bone!"

The teeny-tiny woman was a teeny-tiny bit frightened, so she hid her teeny-tiny head under the teeny-tiny covers and went to sleep again. And when the teeny-tiny woman had been sleeping a teeny-tiny time, the teeny-tiny voice again cried out from the teeny-tiny cupboard, a teeny-tiny louder, "Give me my bone!"

This made the teeny-tiny woman a teeny-tiny bit more frightened, so she hid her teeny-tiny head a teeny-tiny further under the teeny-tiny covers. And when the teeny-tiny woman had been to sleep again a teeny-tiny time, the teeny-tiny voice from the teeny-tiny cupboard said again, a teeny-tiny louder, "Give me my bone!"

The teeny-tiny woman was a teeny-tiny bit more frightened, but she peeked her teeny-tiny head out from under the teeny-tiny covers, and said in her loudest teeny-tiny voice:

"TAKE IT!"

Whether storytellers use one of these tried-and-true versions or another variation they are sure to get the proper response from the audience: delighted shrieks and gasps of shock.

See also: Tall Tales.

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Jung, Carl Gustav

(1875–1961)

Carl Gustav Jung was a Swiss psychiatrist and the founder of analytical psychology. What makes him of interest to storytellers and folklorists is his work with dreams, archetypes, and the collective unconscious.

Jung was born in the village of Kesswil in the German-speaking section of Switzerland on July 25, 1875. The older of two children, he developed an early interest in dreams and occult phenomena. Jung attended medical school in Basel, Switzerland, specializing in the new science of psychiatry.

In 1900, he became an assistant at the Burghölzli clinic near Zürich, where his studies of association and psychic complexes soon caught the interest of Sigmund Freud and his Viennese circle. From 1904 to 1913, Jung and the psychiatrists at the hospital, also known as the Zürich school, became part of the growing psychoanalytic movement.

In 1912, Jung published his work *Symbols of Transformation,* which marked a bitter break with Freud's views. The severing of their friendship was never repaired. Jung could not accept Freud's view that sexual trauma was at the base of all psychological problems. Jung preferred to look into the nature of symbolism to see what problems arose in those who were ignorant of their own deeper, "symbolic" nature. This would develop into what Jung called, and what is still called, analytical psychology.

Jung was fascinated by the universality of human symbols, myths, and cross-cultural references. He said of the archetype:

> The primordial image, or archetype, is a figure—be it a daemon, a human being, or a process—that constantly recurs in the course of history and appears wherever creative fantasy is freely expressed. Essentially, therefore, it is a mythological figure. . . . In each of these images there is a little piece of human psychology and human fate, a remnant of the joys and sorrows that have been repeated countless times in our ancestral history.

Jung coined the term *collective unconscious* to describe the reservoir of experiences that humans share as a species, a kind of knowledge that is present in everyone at birth. For

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The pioneering Swiss psychiatrist Carl G. Jung was intrigued by archetypes (symbolic figures), such as the wise old man or the trickster, common to all cultures. Jung coined the term "collective unconscious" to describe this commonality. *(Snark/Art Resource, NY)*

instance, all cultures have the characters of the Trickster and the Hero.

Jung also introduced the concepts of extraversion and introversion, the outgoing and the shy personality, respectively, and explained human behavior as a combination of four psychic functions: thinking, feeling (or valuing), intuition, and sensation. In addition, he coined the term *synchronicity,* which he defined as meaningful coincidence. A prolific writer, Jung published more than twenty books on various topics dealing with the mind.

Jung spent his later years in his house beside Lake Zurich in Switzerland. On the night of his death, June 6, 1961, many of his friends and disciples worldwide are said to have dreamed of his death. And, in a wonderful bit of synchronicity, at the moment of his death, his favorite tree was split in two by a sudden bolt of lightning.

Soren Ekstrom

See also: Archetype; Collective Unconscious.

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Juniper Tree, The

(German)

Perhaps the darkest folktale commonly used by storytellers is "The Juniper Tree," collected by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm from the German artist Philipp Otto Runge (1777–1810).

A man's wife died and left him with a son. The father married a second time, and the couple had a daughter. But the second wife hated her stepson, abused him, and then murdered him, adding his flesh to the stew. The daughter, who was a good child, found the bones, buried them under a juniper tree, then wept for her brother and refused to eat. The father, not suspecting anything, ate the stew.

A miraculous bird rose up from the juniper tree, singing of the murder: "My mother killed me, my father ate me, my sister gathered my bones and laid them beneath the juniper tree."

The bird's song was so beautiful that the goldsmith, at the bird's command, gave the bird a golden chain. The shoemaker, at the bird's command, gave him a pair of red shoes. And the miller, at the bird's command, gave him the millstone. Then the bird flew home.

The bird sang again, and the father ran out to hear him. The golden chain settled around the father's neck. The sister ran out to hear him, and the red shoes fell at her feet. The mother ran out—and the millstone fell upon her and killed her. The bird became a boy again, and he, his father, and his sister were happily reunited.

This tale of abuse, murder, cannibalism, and revenge is not an isolated example. It is

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categorized by folklorists as a tale type called "My Mother Slew Me, My Father Ate Me." It is found in various versions from Scandinavia to Egypt.

"The Juniper Tree" was used by the German author and playwright Johann Wolfgang von Goethe as the basis for Marguerite's song in his 1808 drama, *Faust*:

My mother, the whore,
She has murdered me!
My father, the rogue,
He has eaten me!
My sister, so small,
My bones, one and all,
In a cool place did lay.
A forest bird fair I became that day;
Fly away! Fly away!

In 1984, American composer Philip Glass created an opera in two acts, based on the Brothers Grimm story. This work also was titled *The Juniper Tree*.

See also: Tale Types.

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Kalevala

(Finnish)

The *Kalevala* is the national epic of Finland. It was compiled by the philologist and folklorist Elias Lönnrot (1802–1884) from ballads, songs, and chants that originated in Finnish oral tradition.

The publication of the *Kalevala* was an important point in the development of Finnish literature. It enhanced the Finnish people's pride in their national heritage and introduced the Finnish people, culture, and history to the rest of the world.

The first edition, published in 1835, was revised and expanded in 1849. The latter version is the standard. It is still read in Finland and is the basis for most translations. The 1849 edition is referred to as the *Uusi Kalevala* (*The New Kalevala*), to distinguish it from the earlier work.

The *Kalevala* is composed of fifty poems totaling more than 20,000 lines. It begins with a creation tale and continues with stories of the deeds of three men: Vainamoinen, a magician; Ilmarinen, a smith; and Lemminkainen, a warrior with a love for beautiful women. The epic ends with the introduction of Christianity to Finland.

The poems recorded by Lönnrot were originally songs that were sung in an unrhymed, nonstrophic trochaic tetrameter. That is, each line has four feet consisting of a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable. Today, this is often referred to as Kalevala meter. Many believe that the tradition of using this meter dates back 3,000 years.

The melodies of these traditional songs consisted of a narrow range of five notes. The songs remained a vital part of the Finnish culture until the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, when the Lutheran Church in Finland forbade singing. After that, the old traditions and songs began to disappear, especially in western Finland, where the church had the most influence.

Lönnrot adapted some of the poems in the belief that he was reconstructing the plot of an ancient epic that had survived only in fragments. Scholars believe, however, that the *Kalevala* as a single, coherent epic did not exist prior to Lönnrot's work.

Maria Teresa Agozzino

See also: Ahti/Ahto; Aino; Joukahainen; Kullervo; Lemminkainen; Louhi; Sampo; Vainamoinen.

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Kamishibai

(Japanese)

Kamishibai, which means "paper drama," is a form of street storytelling that was very popular in Japan from the 1920s to the 1950s. Large color pictures, called kamishibai cards, were used to accompany dramatic narration.

The *gaito kamishibaiya-san,* or kamishibai storyteller, was an itinerant performer and candy seller who traveled from village to village by bicycle. When he stopped for a show, he would call an audience of children to him by slapping together wooden clappers.

The storyteller began by selling his candy, giving the best seats for the show to his top customers. Then the storyteller would set up an easel or a small stage, and he would proceed to tell a few episodes from a story. When he was done, he would leave the children waiting anxiously for his next visit.

This type of storytelling is similar to certain traditions elsewhere in Asia. In China, some storytellers used wooden clappers to announce their arrival. In India, pictures were used during the telling of religious stories.

Kamishibai storytelling is currently enjoying a revival in many Japanese libraries and schools.

See also: Japanese Storytelling.

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Kelly, Ned

(1854–1880)

Ned Kelly is Australia's foremost folk hero. This nineteenth-century outlaw has inspired numerous tales, films, and songs.

Born to Irish parents in Victoria in 1854, Kelly became a bushranger—an Australian rural outlaw. Ned Kelly, his brother, Dan, and two others were known as the Kelly Gang. The foursome battled the Australian police from 1878 to 1880.

In 1878, a police officer claimed that he had been attacked by Ned's mother and shot by Ned. Mrs. Kelly was sent to prison, and a reward of 100 pounds was posted for Ned. On October 26, the brothers encountered a group of policemen camped at Stringy Bark Creek. During the ensuing confrontation, Ned Kelly shot and killed all the officers.

The reward for Kelly and his gang rose to 2,000 pounds and would later rise to 8,000 pounds. The Kelly Gang had many supporters, and, for almost two years, they dodged the police. During this time, they also robbed two banks.

The most famous part of the story is that of the Kelly Gang's last stand during a siege at the Glenrowan Hotel in 1880. Surrounded by police, the gang, dressed in suits of steel armor, shot it out with the police.

During the battle, Ned Kelly escaped through police lines, but he returned a number of times to fight, trying to rescue his brother and other gang members. Eventually, he collapsed with more than twenty-eight bullet wounds to his arms, legs, feet, groin, and hands. Beneath his armor, Kelly wore a green sash he had been given many years earlier for saving a drowning boy.

Ned Kelly, the only survivor of the siege, was arrested. On November 11, 1880, he was hanged at Melbourne Gaol at the age of twenty-five.

When Kelly was sentenced to death, thousands of supporters protested. Today, a giant

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Ned Kelly was a real-life Australian outlaw who popular culture remade into a romantic figure. In this illustration, which dates to 1880, the year of his death, Kelly wears his famous bucket helmet. *(Hulton Archive/Stringer/Getty Images)*

statue welcomes visitors to Kelly Country, where every ten years, the Glenrowan siege is reenacted.

James A. Hartley

See also: Culture Heroes.

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Kenyan Storytelling

Storytelling and oral traditions of all kinds are still very active in Kenya, from villagers exchanging riddles to television programs that use folktales in their stories.

Each of more than forty ethnic groups within Kenya's borders has its own variety of stories. These include large collections of proverbs and riddles, all of which reflect both internal and external influences and are still very much a part of daily speech.

For instance, the Swahili people, who live along Kenya's coast, have had more contact with Islamic sailors and merchants. As a result, their stories are more likely to include familiar Arabic folktale characters, such as the *djinn.* The stories of the people who live inland, such as the Kikuyu, are more likely to feature only familiar African characters, such as the trickster figure Hare.

In most cases, riddling sessions, such as those of the Yoruba people of Nigeria, take place at twilight before the start of a storytelling session. These riddling sessions are often turned into competitions between two young men or women who pretend to bet amazingly large items, such as cattle or whole villages, on the outcome of the contest. Many cultures have a prohibition on telling riddles during daylight hours. The Kikuyu riddle game is particularly elaborate, consisting of a duet of sung poem-riddles, or *gicandia,* with the riddle singing accompanied by the rattle of a decorated gourd.

Modern Kenyan media, such as television and radio programs, often include folklore, and the study of oral literature is part of the school curriculum. Many Kenyan schools have a period when the children tell stories, the way Western schools might have a show-and-tell period. In addition, students are required to collect folklore from their families.

Even as globalization sweeps over the African continent, Kenyans continue to believe that folklore is an important part of their heritage and culture. And they are taking steps to preserve their folklore and the art of storytelling.

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Khnum

(Egyptian)

Khnum was an ancient Egyptian deity of fertility and water. First and foremost a craftsman, Khnum was believed to mold the bodies of children and their *ka* (soul) on a potter's wheel.

One of several ram gods of ancient Egypt, Khnum was depicted as a human male with a ram's head or, rarely, as a ram, wearing a solar crown or disk. A water jug, the hieroglyphic sign for his name, and which signified his association with the great flood was perched atop his horns.

Khnum constructed the ladder by which the dead kings ascended to the sky and the boat that took them across waterways in the netherworld. He also became known as the creator of all living creatures, especially humankind.

Khnum became associated with several towns, specifically Esna and Elephantine. The latter was located on an island where caverns were thought to be the source of the annual flooding of the Nile, which was regulated by Khnum. Two goddesses, Satet (or Satis) and Anuket (or Anukis), dispensed cool water and were worshipped with Khnum at this site.

Other divine consorts of Khnum included the frog goddess of childbirth, Heqat, the war and creator goddess, Neith, and an obscure lion goddess named Menhyt. In one tale, Khnum played the part of the goddesses' baggage handler when they were sent to assist in the births of three kings.

Noreen Doyle

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Khoikhoi/Hottentot Mythology

The Khoikhoi are indigenous peoples of southern Africa who speak the Khoisan language. They were formerly known as the Hottentots, a name given to them by Dutch settlers that means "stutterers." This name is probably a reference to the clicking sounds that are prominent in the Khoisan language.

The Khoikhoi have a rich tradition of hero and monster tales that are worth noting by storytellers who are hunting for authentic ethnic stories.

Deities

Gamab is the supreme god, a god of the sky who lives in the heavens. When humans are meant to die, Gamab shoots fatal arrows to strike them down.

Gunab is the god of evil, who does whatever he can to destroy humankind. Tsui is the god of rain and thunder. He is also the god of sorcerers.

Monsters

Aigamuxa are man-eating monsters that stories say may be encountered among the dunes. Their eyes are located on the bottoms of their feet. When they want to see around them, they have to get down on their hands and knees and hold up one foot. This gives a fast runner a chance to escape.

The Ga-gorib is the "thrower-down" monster. Stories say he perched on the edge of a great pit and dared humans to hit him with a stone. This was a trick, since the stones would never harm the Ga-gorib but would recoil with killing force on the human. The corpse would then fall into the pit. The hero Heitsi-Eibib finally slew the Ga-gorib.

Hai-Uri has only one side, with one leg and one arm, and he is almost invisible. Hai-Uri

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gets around by jumping over obstacles and is swift enough to catch unwary humans.

Heroes

Heitsi-Eibib is a mythic or culture hero, said to be the son of a cow and the magical grass that the cow ate. Heitsi-Eibib was a great magician, a patron of hunters, and a superb fighter. One of his feats was defeating the monstrous Ga-gorib.

In one version of the story, Heitsi-Eibib distracted the monster before throwing the stone that slew it. Another story claims that during a wild chase Heitsi-Eibib slipped into Ga-gorib's pit but managed not to fall. He pulled himself back up and wrestled with Ga-gorib until he hurled the monster back into the pit. According to the stories, Heitsi-Eibib was killed on numerous occasions but always was able to resurrect himself.

Storytellers willing to take the time to better understand the Khoikhoi culture are certain to find more rich materials for their stories from these strong, enduring, and fascinating people.

See also: Aigamuxa.

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Kievan Cycle

(Russian)

The Kievan cycle is a collection of epic verse that tells the story of Prince Vladimir of Russia and his *bogatyri,* the warriors who served him. In Eastern Europe the Kievan cycle is as well-known as the King Arthur tales are in the West.

Vladimir the Great

Many comparisons can be made between the Kievan cycle and Arthurian legends. Historically, the existence of King Arthur has never been proven. The life of Prince Vladimir, on the other hand, is well documented.

Prince Vladimir I, or Vladimir the Great, was born in 956 C.E. and died on July 15, 1015. Vladimir was one of the grand princes of Kiev. He also was the prince of Novgorod in the heart of what was known as Rus, and is now Ukraine and much of Russia.

Why the folk process centered around Vladimir probably had little to do with the man himself. He was a strong ruler who thought nothing of murdering an inconvenient brother or of having seven wives, some of them simultaneously. Despite this lack of saintly behavior, however, he was granted sainthood for ordering the Christian conversion of Kiev and Novgorod.

The folk cycle with Vladimir at its center does not focus on his conversion to Christianity, and it ignores much of his character. It is likely that the cycle was inspired by the time period in which Vladimir ruled, which is regarded in the Russian and Ukrainian folk traditions as a golden age. The Kievan dynasty in Russia ruled from the ninth through the thirteenth centuries. Vladimir's reign (c. 980–1015) was a time of plenty, during which peasants were free men and women. These subjects' Western counterparts lived much more poorly.

Prince Vladimir fought a campaign against the Bulgars, but he died more than a century before the birth of the true peril to Russia, Genghis Khan and the Golden Horde of the Mongols. The Mongols did not besiege Russia until the thirteenth century. But, lacking a true historic invader to threaten the fictional Kiev, the folk process detached the

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Mongols from their real-world setting and inserted them into the Kievan cycle. This casual rearranging of history is not unusual.

The *Bylini*

Sir Thomas Malory and, to a lesser extent, Alfred Lord Tennyson, provided the popular image of Arthur and his golden Camelot. The Kievan cycle did not benefit from such an organized retelling and exists today in its original form as a series of *bylini,* or folk epic poems. These epics date, like many of the Arthurian tales, to the tenth through the fifteenth centuries.

The word *bylini* probably derives from the Russian word *byl,* which means "that which happened." Yet there was never a pretense that bylini were accurate representations of history.

Bylini stayed strictly in the oral tradition until the nineteenth century, when the tradition of the *skaziteli,* the wandering bards, died out and the tradition of the wandering folklorist-transcriber began. The earliest bylini actually may have been created when Prince Vladimir was still alive, but the tales did not take place at his court and related the adventures of his knights, rather than Vladimir's own exploits.

Arthur was undeniably active during his early years as king, winning Excalibur and fighting King Pellinore. But as the tales of his knights and their adventures became more prominent, Arthur took on a more passive role. The knights were free to roam and find adventure, while Arthur was bound to court and to his destiny as an archetypical tragic hero. Even in the most dramatic tales of Arthur's betrayal by Guinevere and of his final conflict with his bastard son, Mordred, Arthur seems more a catalyst or a victim than an active hero.

Prince Vladimir has no heroic tales of his own in the Kievan cycle. The historic prince was a strong and even ruthless ruler, but the folk cycle turned him into a character more passive than even Arthur eventually became. Vladimir's role in the bylini was as a focal point around which other characters' adventures could happen.

Part of this change from strong ruler to passive folkloric figure may be due to the reality of a prince being bound to his court and therefore unable to seek out adventures. But, almost certainly, the major reason for the alteration is the fact that the life of the real Vladimir defeated any attempts at romanticism. In the tales, Vladimir is portrayed as being happily married to only one wife, with a legitimate daughter and no extramarital complications. There are no tales of illicit love in his court, nor is there a malevolent sorceress in his family tree.

The *Bogatyri*

One similarity between the Arthurian and the Kievan story cycles is their focus on the adventures of the knights or the *bogatyri*. Some of these warriors, such as Lancelot of the Arthurian cycle and Ilya Muromets of the Kievan cycle, have story cycles of their own that are only loosely related to the parent sources. Another similarity is that both knights and bogatyri were sworn to the cause of "right."

Still, the parallels cannot be taken too far. There does not seem to be any evidence for a bogatyri ceremony similar to the formal ritual of knighthood. And the greatest difference between the knights and the bogatyri is the issue of social class.

The Arthurian knights are very much members of the nobility. Even Perceval, the boy who came to court without much in the way of social graces, is not a peasant, but the son of a noble knight. By contrast, the bogatyri come from all elements of Kievan society. A few, such as Vol'ka, may be princes in their own right. One *bogatyr,* Alyosha Popovich, is the son of a priest. But the bogatyri are just as likely to come from pure peasant stock, with no shame about it, as did the greatest of Kievan heroes, Ilya Murometz.

Ilya Murometz

In modern Russia, the most popular figure from the Kievan cycle remains the same as

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ever: Ilya Murometz. Ilya has been the star of modern Russian poems and plays, and even an opera and a movie.

Ilya is a peasant and lacks conventional heroic good looks and graces—he is usually portrayed as a solid barrel of a man. But Ilya is also the leader of the bogatyri, renowned for his honesty and his nearly magical strength. According to the bylini, Ilya was born lame and was healed by mysterious visitors, who were either angels or magical beings.

The earliest bylina that features Ilya dates to the eleventh century. This tale places him in an adventure against a magical robber, a non-human creature who "hisses like a dragon" to shake the earth, "growls like a beast," or "sings or whistles like a nightingale." Unfazed by these shows of power, Ilya calmly shoots the creature with a well-placed arrow and hauls it off to perform at Prince Vladimir's court.

Ilya is as true to his word and deed as any Arthurian knight, but he would just as happily trade glory for a good drink of beer. Ilya Murometz is, for Russians, the very essence of the common man.

Other Protagonists

The bylini also feature other, more sophisticated protagonists. The second in command of the bogatyri, as well as second in folk popularity, is Dobrynya Nikitich. He is one of the few folk characters in the bylini, other than Prince Vladimir, who is based on a real person. The historic Dobrynya was Vladimir's uncle, who helped him gain the throne.

In the bylini, Dobrynya is not related to Vladimir, but he remains true to the actual Dobrynya in nature—a cultured and kind-hearted bogatyr, accomplished in the skills of diplomacy, archery, and music. The telling of Dobrynya's story is also a good example of a characteristic of many bylini: their common-sense touch.

The poem mentions a hot day on which the bogatyr's old mother urges him to wear his "wide Greek hat," his sunhat. Dobrynya goes down to the river for a cooling swim. It is during this idyll that a monstrous, talkative, many-headed dragon swoops down, meaning to kill the bogatyr. Dobrynya grabs his sunhat, scoops up a load of wet sand, and literally sandbags the dragon. It is hard to picture an Arthurian knight being so pragmatic.

Later, the dragon steals Vladimir's daughter, and Dobrynya goes after the stolen princess. There is the expected bloody battle, in which the dragon is slain and the princess is rescued. However, the bylina does not end with a wedding between the hero and the lady in distress, possibly because its creator remembered that the real Dobrynya was Vladimir's uncle.

The character of Alyosha Popovich comes closer to the sophistication of the knightly image than any of the other bogatyri. He is a quick-witted and quick-tempered young hero—handsome and always eager for a fight. He is also the only bogatyr to feel superior toward those of peasant blood, and he often acts as an irritant to stir others to action. Alyosha's finest moment comes in an eleventh-century bylini, when he battles Turgarin, the "dragon's son," a fantastic, shape-shifting warrior who may be roughly based on a real enemy, the Polovetzian khan Tugorkan.

Mystical Beings and Women

The dragon's son, as well as the talking, many-headed dragon that Dobrynya fights, are among several strange beings that appear in the bylini. Equal numbers of fantastic occurrences and beings appear in both the Arthurian and Kievan stories. But there is a major difference in the way they, and the idea of magic, are viewed.

It can be argued that Christianity has more heavily influenced the Arthurian cycle than it has its Kievan counterpart. As a result, magic in the Arthurian world tends to be seen through unsympathetic eyes. Most magical beings, with Merlin as one of the few exceptions, are villains. Even Merlin's powers are seen as darkly tinged; in many versions, his father was said to have been a demon.

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The Kievan cycle portrays a magician-prince, Vol'ka. Unlike Merlin, Vol'ka is more than merely the power behind the throne. Vol'ka is an accepted member of Vladimir's court and a protagonist in his own right, taking center stage in his own bylini. Vol'ka talks almost at birth, learns more in a year than a grown man does in a lifetime, and quickly comes into his magical abilities.

It has been suggested by some scholars that Vol'ka may be a more modern version of a much earlier figure. Since his name may derive from the Russian *volk,* meaning wolf, and Vol'ka has shamanistic powers of shape-shifting into bird or other animal forms, he might have been based on an earlier folk-hero shaman.

Other characters found in the bylini include Mikula Selyaninovich, which means "Mikula, son of the village." Mikula is introduced while working in the field, with a powerful filly and a plow so heavy that no other bogatyr, not even a team of bogatyri, could move it. In each story that features Mikula, his strength is closely linked to the earth, which perhaps indicates that he was the last vestige of some primal agricultural deity.

The bogatyr called Svyatogor is described as being "taller than the dark forest." His head supported the clouds, and when he rode, the earth shook and the waters overflowed. Seeking a mighty deed, this giant hero sought out nothing less than the heart of the earth's gravity. And none other than Mikula Selyaninovich possessed it, keeping it in a sack he tossed easily from shoulder to shoulder. Svyatogor tried and failed to lift the sack, at last surrendering and staggering off to more traditional princess-rescuing adventures.

There are strong women in both the Arthurian and Kievan cycles, both good and evil, though only in the Kievan cycle are there mentions of women warriors. One of Mikula's daughters was a warrior, and there is a bylina about another of his daughters, the heroic and lovely Vassilissa. When Prince Vladimir arrested Vassilissa's husband, she disguised herself as a Tartar prince. In that guise, she outwrestled, outshot, and outwitted the bogatyri and even Prince Vladimir to rescue her husband from the prince's prison.

The Cycle Ends

The beginning of the end for king and kingdom in the Arthurian cycle is marked by the start of the quest for the Holy Grail. But a Grail symbol is conspicuously lacking in the Kievan cycle. The bylini do not include a dramatic ending.

For all their high deeds and involvement with the royal court, the bylini were not the creations of literary poets, but stories about heroes of the common people.

See also: Bylina/Bylini; Epics.

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Kikimora

(Slavic)

In Slavic folklore, the mysterious female *kikimora* may be either a house spirit, whom some tales say is the wife of the *domovoi,* or a wild being of the forest or swamps. As a house spirit, she usually lives behind the stove or in the cellar, like the domovoi.

The size and shape of the kikimora varies. In the role of the house spirit, she may look like an ordinary woman with her hair unbound, or she may appear as a small, dirty, humpbacked woman. But as the wild being, she has been described as having a tiny head and a straw-thin body, or a long beak, scrawny neck, taloned fingers, and feet like those of a chicken.

When the kikimora decides (or possibly is assigned, by whom is unknown) to be a house spirit, she takes care of the chickens. She will help with the housework if it is clear that the

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farmer's wife is doing her best but is overburdened with work.

The kikimora will toil all night after the humans are asleep. She will do this, however, only if the home is well kept. If it is not, or if she is angered in some other way, she will bother the family, particularly the children, by tickling people who are trying to sleep, and whistling and whining so that no one can get any rest. To appease her, the house must be thoroughly cleaned, and the pots should be washed in fern tea.

The kikimora does have an aspect that seems similar to that of the Irish banshee. She spins at night, and anyone who sees her spinning will soon die.

Although she is not a well-known folkloric figure outside of Slavic lands, a modern Finnish publisher has been named Kikimora and uses a likeness as its logo.

The Russian composer Anatol Liadov (1855–1914) wrote a seven-minute tone poem titled *Kikimora, Opus 63,* which was first performed in 1909.

See also: Slavic Mythology.

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Kind and Unkind Girls

There is a clear moral to the world folktale type "kind and unkind girls." The main protagonists are two sisters or, more often, a sister and a stepsister. One of the two is kind, and the other is unkind. Both are sent out to find their fates.

The Kind Girl

It is always the kind girl who sets out first in the tales. She may leave voluntarily or be cast out by an angry mother or jealous stepmother, often to perform some onerous or dangerous task. For example, she may be encouraged to go out and seek employment, or she may be sent out on some impossible mission, such as gathering strawberries in the middle of winter. In some stories, she does not set out on an adventure, but falls into a well or is pushed into one by the stepmother.

The kind girl travels through the forest, or, if she has gone down the well, she ends up in a magical forest that opens from the bottom of the well. She generally is in pursuit of an object, such as a skein of wool that the wind has carried off, or is in haste for some other reason.

As she hurries along, the kind girl meets various talking animals or talking objects, each of which asks for her help. A sheep may ask to be sheared, or an oven to have loaves removed before they burn. In all cases, despite her haste, the kind girl stops to help the animals or objects without complaint. Along the way, she also may be kind to an old man or woman.

At the end of her journey, the kind girl reaches the home of a magical being. This may be a mysterious old man, a witch, or a blatantly supernatural entity such as a fairy, a devil, personified seasons, or (in Christian versions) a saint or even the Virgin Mary.

The kind girl is put to various tasks, ranging from the relatively mundane—housework or farmwork—to the supernatural. Tasks of the latter sort might include combing the hair of three giant heads that rise up out of a stream or well. In all cases, including variants where the kind girl must escape rather than be let go, the animals and objects she assisted come to her aid.

At the end of her stay, the kind girl is offered a reward, and she must choose between modest or ornate gifts. She always chooses the modest reward. Returning home, the kind girl finds that gold or gems fall from her lips whenever she speaks, or that she is now more beautiful than ever, or that she has earned some similar reward.

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The Unkind Girl

When the kind girl returns home, the unkind girl and the stepmother want the unkind girl to be rewarded, too. So the unkind girl undertakes the same journey, but she is too haughty to help the animals or objects. When she reaches the strange home, she refuses to work or does the tasks in a sloppy fashion. All the time, she keeps demanding her rewards.

The unkind girl is allowed to return home. But when she speaks, frogs drop from her lips, or she finds the ornate gifts full of snakes, or she is uglier than before.

In most cases, the tale ends traditionally, with the kind girl marrying a prince.

This tale type has been found across Europe, as well as in Greece and Turkey.

See also: Tale Types.

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King Arthur

(British)

King Arthur of Britain is quite possibly the most widely known and celebrated character in the English language. Existing in the hazy borderlands that link history, mythology, and art, the story of Arthur, also known as the Matter of Britain, has been told and retold for hundreds of years.

The Tale

Arthur was born in the fifth century C.E. He was the son of King Uther Pendragon. Uther had fallen in love with Igraine, Duchess of Cornwall, who was the wife of Duke Gorlois. With the aid of the wizard Merlin, Uther went secretly to Igraine's bed disguised as Gorlois, and Arthur was conceived. Soon thereafter, Gorlois met his death in battle, and Uther made Igraine his queen.

Upon Arthur's birth, Merlin whisked the boy away to be raised in secret as the fosterling of Sir Ector. Raised alongside Sir Ector's own son, Kay, Arthur eventually was made squire to his foster brother. At a tournament held upon Uther's death, Kay sent his young squire to fetch a sword. Unable to find Kay's blade, Arthur pulled an enchanted sword free from a stone and anvil. This action revealed that he was the son of Uther and true heir to the throne of England.

Once crowned, Arthur sought out the Lady of the Lake, who gave him the sword called Excalibur. Armed with Excalibur, Arthur defeated and drove away the Saxon invaders who had been menacing Britain. Triumphant, and with his realm secure, Arthur took the beautiful Guinevere as his queen. Guinevere's dowry included a round banquet table.

Arthur brought the finest knights in the realm to his court at Camelot. These included

An anonymous medieval illustration depicts young Arthur pulling the sword from the stone. This heroic feat proved Arthur's right to the English throne. *(© British Library/HIP/Art Resource, NY)*

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the legendary figures Lancelot, Gawain, Perceval, and even Kay, his foster brother, whom Arthur made his seneschal. These so-called Knights of the Round Table sat as peers and equals, with none closer to the place of honor than any other. Together, they set out to cleanse the realm of evil. Their adventures culminated in the famous quest for the Holy Grail.

Arthur's eventual downfall did not come in battle, but rather was due to a love triangle and family drama worthy of Greek tragedy. Queen Guinevere fell in love with Arthur's best knight, Sir Lancelot, and they carried on a secret affair for years. By some accounts, Arthur knew of their betrayal, but he could not bring himself to condemn them or end their affair.

Guinevere did not bear Arthur an heir. Arthur's bastard son Mordred, the child of Morgan le Fay, a witch and Arthur's half-sister (or by some accounts the child of Morgan's sister, Queen Morgause of Orkney) had a claim to the throne.

Mordred was not content to wait for Arthur's death, and so he arrived in Camelot to stir up trouble. He engineered the exposure of Guinevere's infidelity, and divided the Knights of the Round Table into factions—those still loyal to Arthur and those loyal to Mordred. Guinevere was charged with high treason and sentenced to be burned at the stake, but Lancelot carried her away before the fires could be lit. While Lancelot saved the queen, he thus severed his ties with Arthur.

In the end, Arthur and Mordred clashed in battle on the field of Camlann. Mordred was slain, and Arthur was fatally wounded. Arthur was carried away by four mysterious queens and taken on a barge to the enchanted isle of Avalon. There he is believed to lie sleeping until it is time for him to return in the hour of Britain's greatest need.

A History in Story

In the fifteenth century, Sir Thomas Malory wrote *Le morte d'Arthur,* which some believe he compiled from scattered French sources. Malory's work brought together numerous strands of the Arthur legends into a single comprehensive volume. Malory was nothing if not thorough. He included detailed descriptions of every tournament fought by Arthur's knights, down to the gory details of exactly how each knight was wounded.

In the twentieth century, T.H. White used *Le morte d'Arthur* as the basis for his novel *The Once and Future King* (1958), which focused on the question of whether might makes right. White's novel was the inspiration for the Broadway musical *Camelot* (1960), as well as Disney's animated feature *The Sword in the Stone* (1963), which focused on White's whimsical depiction of young Arthur getting a magical education from Merlin while still ignorant of his true heritage. Like White, John Boorman also looked to Malory when making his film *Excalibur* (1981).

Arthur's story has been celebrated in high art, as in Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem cycle *Idylls of the King* (1859–1885), and the legends have been lampooned on Broadway in Monty Python's *Spamalot* (2005), which is based on the group's earlier comedy *The Holy Grail* (1975). The story was even chosen as the subject of a tarot deck with Anna Marie Ferguson's *Legend: The Arthurian Tarot* in 2002.

Marion Zimmer Bradley turned the Arthur story upside-down in her novel *The Mists of Avalon* (1983) by focusing on its women, particularly Morgaine (Morgan le Fay). Bradley offered a startling feminist interpretation and a look at the changing spiritual paths of early Britain.

Arthur's influence is not limited to fiction. In recent American history, the presidency of John F. Kennedy was dubbed Camelot.

Historical Arthur?

Was King Arthur a real, historical figure? If so, where did he live, rule, and die? Around 1190, the supposed grave of Arthur was discovered at Glastonbury in southern England. During the Renaissance, the Tudor royal

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family argued for a historical Arthur, and traced their lineage back to him in order to support their claim to the throne. To this day, historians search through scraps of early British history in search of a clue to who the "real" Arthur might have been—or if he existed at all. Conflicting dates, unreliable narrators, and translation issues make the task quite tricky.

There are early British references to the era of the wars against the Germanic tribes. A British Latin work, *The Ruin of Britain,* which dates from sometime in the first to fourth centuries C.E., describes the destruction of British society that occurred during these wars, and it speaks of the defense led by one Ambrosius Aurelianus. The author of this work was a churchman named Gildas, who claimed that he was born in the same year as a battle fought at Mons Badonicus, a British victory that brought a period of peace. Gildas did not mention Arthur, but his primary focus was the present, not the past—to mourn and criticize the moral decay of his own era.

There is also the question of where in Britain Arthur lived: Was Camelot an English palace, a Roman stronghold, or a hill-fort in Wales? Which ancient ruin overlooking the sea in Cornwall was Igraine's castle of Tintagel? And is there an actual island that corresponds to Avalon?

Whether or not Arthur ever truly existed, something about him strikes a chord for storytellers and listeners, which has allowed his tale to endure for more than a thousand years. His story is accessible and appealing to the casual reader, and yet can offer challenges to literary intellectuals and historians. It can be a simple tale of adventures and magic, a haunting tragedy, or a philosophical look at the human condition.

While archeologists search for the historical Arthur, storytellers and artists of all media continue to draw inspiration from his seemingly inexhaustible well of legend. Told and retold, layered and reshaped, the Matter of Britain can be seen as a touchstone for the values and cultural concerns of every age of history. Each retelling changes the story and its characters to reflect the times in which it is told.

Camelot, the Round Table, and Arthur remain symbols of high romance and chivalry in an age long past, and a hope for their eventual return.

Shanti Fader

See also: Culture Heroes.

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King of the Cats/King of the Cats is Dead

(Western European)

The tale type known as King of the Cats or the King of the Cats is Dead concerns the death of a nonhuman ruler and the sudden intrusion of the otherworld into ordinary affairs. This intrusion most commonly comes in the form of a cat suddenly speaking and claiming kingship.

A typical form of the tale, collected in Scotland by Charlotte S. Burne in the nineteenth century, tells of a young man who tells friends of seeing a grand funeral for a cat. The family cat then cries out, "Then I'm the king of the cats!" and rushes off, never to be seen again.

See also: Tale Types.

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King Solomon

(Biblical)

The biblical and historical King Solomon became ruler of Israel in approximately 967 B.C.E. and reigned for forty years. During that long reign, King Solomon became particularly noted for his wisdom.

The Queen of Sheba

The first of the folk-story cycles to center on King Solomon concerns a visit paid to the king by the queen of Sheba. Archaeological evidence places the biblical Sheba in the South Arabian land of Saba. It is quite possible that a queen once ruled this now-dead kingdom and traded with King Solomon, but the Bible does not include a story of this visit, so it is most likely strictly folklore.

The stories include a romance between King Solomon and the queen of Sheba, whose name in the folktales is Balkis. The royal legend of Ethiopia claims that the queen returned home pregnant with Solomon's child. This child went on to establish the royal dynasty of Ethiopia that lasted until the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974.

Solomon's Magical Power

As is sometimes the case with folklore, Solomon's wisdom became equated with magic. Over the centuries, more and more folktales sprang up in which Solomon possessed magical powers.

Solomon was said to understand the languages of birds and other animals and to have the power to control spirits and demons with a

King Solomon is shown reading the Torah in this miniature painting from a late thirteenth-century Hebrew Bible and prayer book. *(Art Resource, NY)*

magic ring. The ring was engraved with the Seal of Solomon, the six-pointed star now known as the Jewish Star or the Star of David.

Islamic storytellers added another element to the tales, making Solomon the ruler of the supernatural *djinn*. Would-be magicians in medieval Europe studied a *grimoire,* a book of spells that bore the title *The Book of the Goetia of Solomon the King*. It is widely accepted, however, that the historic king did not write this book.

See also: Wise Man or Woman; *Retelling: King Solomon and the Demon.*

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Kludde

(Flemish)

In Flemish folklore, Kludde was a malicious water or tree spirit.

Kludde is said to have lived in hollow trees or to have lived in lakes and be amphibious. Kludde left his home only at night, either just before dawn or just after sunset, hunting for travelers to torment or even slay.

Kludde usually took the shape of a gigantic black dog with large claws and protruding eyes. He was larger and bulkier than a Saint Bernard, and he walked on his hind legs. Iron chains hung on his body and dragged on the ground around him. Despite this awkward posture and the burden of the chains, Kludde was able to move more swiftly than a man. A shape-shifter, Kludde also could take the form of a huge black cat or terrible black bird, or swing swiftly through the trees as a great serpent.

The only warning of his approach was the sound of rattling chains. Whatever shape Kludde took, he remained covered with chains. Sometimes, the whim would strike him to walk along with a traveler without doing any harm and to let the traveler go when the person entered a house. At other times, Kludde would leap onto a traveler's back and cling so firmly that he could not be shaken free. The traveler would be forced to carry Kludde as he grew heavier with every step. In extreme cases, Kludde would even kill the traveler.

Kludde is said to have lived for a time on a small bridge near the town of Schelle. One night, he leaped onto a woman's back and clung there until she managed to struggle home. Then Kludde sprung off and ran away into the night.

In another neighborhood in Schelle, a family happened to be talking about Kludde when they heard the sound of chains in the hallway. When they prayed, the sound stopped. But it came again the next night, and the night after that. Their neighbor was a butcher, who promised to help them. When the sound started again that night, the butcher ran into the house with a large knife in one hand. Coming face to face with Kludde, the butcher threw his knife, striking Kludde and causing him to howl in pain, race off, and never return to Schelle.

A close relative of Kludde's was Osschaart, who was also a shape-shifter. Osschaart looked like a man-headed bull in chains. Osschaart harassed travelers and any fishermen who failed to throw their first catch back into the water.

See also: Black Dogs; Lake Monsters.

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Kullervo

(Finnish)

In the Finnish epic *Kalevala* (1835), Kullervo is a tragic figure, but not a particularly likable one. Rough, ill-tempered, and prone to committing dark deeds, Kullervo is a bitter, sullen character.

Kullervo's father, Kalervo, was killed in a fight with Kullervo's uncle, Untamo, who subsequently sold Kullervo as a slave. Kullervo fled slavery and returned home to find his mother still alive but his sister missing. Later, Kullervo met a lovely maiden and seduced her, only to find that she was his sister. Shamed, his sister threw herself into the river and drowned.

Seeking revenge for his father's death and the other wrongs he had suffered, Kullervo killed Untamo and his family. Upon returning home, Kullervo found his own family dead. In

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the end, Kullero's despair led him to commit suicide.

Kullervo's tragic tale inspired an 1892 symphonic poem by the Finnish composer Jean Sibelius and a 1988 opera by another Finn, Aulis Sallinen.

See also: *Kalevala.*

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Kumarbi/Kumaris

(Hittite)

The Hittite god Kumarbi was considered the father of all gods.

Sometimes equated with the Sumerian god Enlil, Kumarbi is described as bearing a staff and "thinking wise thoughts." His sacred city was Urkis.

Like Anu before him, who served Alalu for nine years then overthrew him, Kumarbi served as Anu's cupbearer for nine years and then rebelled. In the process of catching Anu, Kumarbi bit off and swallowed Anu's phallus.

This left Kumarbi, although male, impregnated with three deities: Teshub, the storm god; Aranzahus, the personification of the Tigris River; and Tasmisus. Kumarbi spat out Aranzahus and Tasmisus onto Mount Kanzuras, but he could not rid himself of Teshub until magic was worked on him.

Kumarbi eventually was overthrown by his son Teshub. Kumarbi then plotted to overthrow Teshub. He lay with a sentient rock, which gave birth to the weapon that Kumarbi believed would give him victory—the stone warrior, Ullikummi. But the attempted coup failed, and Teshub remained in power.

Ira Spar

See also: An/Anu; Wise Man or Woman.

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Kypria

(Greek)

The *Kypria* is one of the lost ancient Greek epics that make up the culture's epic cycle. The *Kypria* centers on the years leading up to the Trojan War and the first nine years of the war, which was not covered in Homer's *Iliad.* The author of the original work is unknown, although it may have been Homer. The epic may date to the seventh or sixth century B.C.E.

Although the original *Kypria* was lost, it was summarized in a work in the fifth century B.C.E., the *Chrestomatheia*. The author of that work may have been Greek philosopher Proclus Diadochus. The work took its name, *Kypria,* from one of the many names for Aphrodite, the goddess of love, who is a major character in the *Kypria*.

The *Kypria* opens with the myth of the judgment of Paris. The Trojan prince was confronted by three goddesses: Athena, goddess of wisdom; Hera, wife of Zeus; and Aphrodite. They demanded that he select the most beautiful of them. When Paris named Aphrodite the winner, she rewarded him with Helen, the most beautiful mortal woman. But Helen was the wife of Menelaos, king of Sparta. When Paris stole Helen away and took her to Troy, Menelaos and his brother, Agamemnon, declared war on Troy.

The Greek army gathered, but before they set sail they were warned that the war would last ten years. Agamemnon sacrificed his daughter, Iphigenia, to appease Artemis, the virgin goddess of the hunt, and gain safe passage for the ships.

When the Greeks landed at Troy, they demanded the return of Helen and her dowry,

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but the Trojans refused. The Greeks besieged the city. The narrative briefly describes the first nine years of the siege and then ends abruptly.

There is a side story, however, that is linked to the motif of a vegetation deity that dies and is reborn seasonally. Helen's brothers, Castor and Polydeuces (or Pollux), were caught stealing cattle and were slain. Zeus made them immortal, with the understanding that when one lived on Earth, the other must reside in the underworld.

See also: *Iliad.*

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La Fontaine, Jean de

(1621–1695)

Jean de La Fontaine was a French poet who is best known for his fables.

Restless and wild as a youth, La Fontaine finally settled in Paris. After a failed marriage, he lived in the household of one of his patrons, Madame de La Sablière, for twenty years.

Despite the failures in his private life, La Fontaine created a masterpiece in his collection called *Fables Choisies, Mises en Vers* (*Chosen Fables in Verse*). This work took La Fontaine nearly thirty years to write; it was first printed in 1668.

The *Fables Choisies* includes 230 fables in all, printed in twelve books. Some of the stories are clearly based on Aesop's fables. Others are satires or commentaries on French society. The fables were an immediate success, going into many printings during La Fontaine's lifetime.

Among La Fontaine's other popular works were four volumes of humorous verse, *Contes et Nouvelles en Vers* (*Stories and Novels in Verse*), which were published over the course of a decade (1664–1674).

See also: Fables.

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Labyrinths

Labyrinths are buildings or gardens made up of a maze of passages or rooms. They are designed so that finding the way from one end to the other is difficult. In mythology and folklore, a labyrinth often symbolizes a spiritual journey.

In the first millennium B.C.E., the Egyptian tomb of Pharaoh Amenemhat III held 3,000 rooms. In Greece, legend tells of a labyrinth on the island of Crete, which may have been nothing more exotic than the elaborate layout of the palace at Knossos. In Greek mythology, King Minos of Crete was said to have built the labyrinth to hold the Minotaur, the monster that was half man and half bull. Numerous other ancient labyrinths can be found across the countries of the Mediterranean, including one at Chiusi, Italy, and another on the island of Lemnos, in Greece.

Labyrinths also can be found on the floors of some medieval churches. These labyrinths are believed to represent the winding path of pilgrims heading toward salvation. The church of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy, has an enormous seven-circuit labyrinth carved into the

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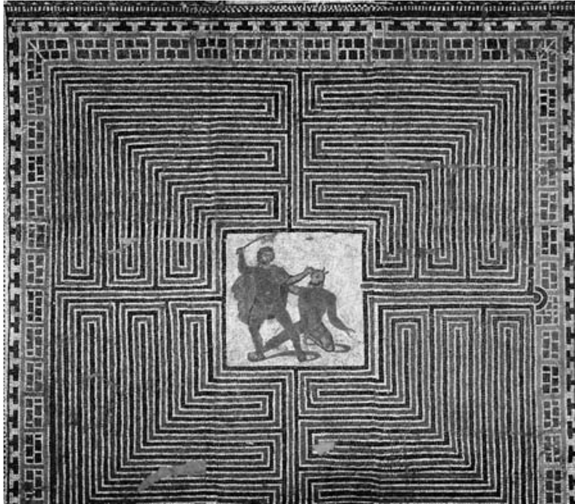

Theseus slays the Minotaur at the center of a labyrinth. This floor mosaic is from a fourth-century C.E. Roman villa near Salzburg, Austria. Labyrinths and images of them can be found in almost every culture. *(Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)*

floor. The cathedral of Chartres, France, has an intricate, eleven-circuit labyrinth.

Labyrinths in Britain generally are garden mazes with walls of clipped hedges. At Hampton Court in London, there is a labyrinth that was first planted in the seventeenth century. Another form of living labyrinth is the British turf maze, in which a design is cut into high grass, such as the one at Alkborough in Lincolnshire.

Modern labyrinth enthusiasts created their own mazes, often following medieval patterns.

See also: Motifs.

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Lake Monsters

Lake monsters have a long folkloric history. Nearly every lake of significant size seems to have one.

The earliest known lake monsters were found in Great Britain. In Wales, the dragonlike Afanc lurked in a pool fed by the Conwy River, and the water dragon Nwyve lived in Lake Cynwch. Scotland is home to a number of these creatures, in addition to the famous Loch Ness monster. Each Uisge is a deadly water horse, and Loch Morar has Morag. The latter has been seen several times, including a 1969 incident in which two fishermen took a shot at Morag and apparently missed. Other lochs said to be inhabited by monsters include Arkaig, Linnhe, Lochy, Oich, Quoich, and Shiel.

In Canada, there is the Ogopogo of Okanagan Lake in British Columbia; the indigenous peoples of the region called this monster N'ha-a-tik. Stories about Ogopogo were told before Europeans arrived in the area, and sightings of the monster dating to 1872 claim that it resembles Nessie of Loch Ness. There was a surge of Ogopogo sightings in the 1920s, after which the monster seems to have become less active.

Also in Canada, Lake Manitoba has Manipopo, whose name is a parody of the name "Ogopogo." Manipopo was sighted first by indigenous groups, and the first supposed photograph of it was taken in 1962. Like so many other snapshots of these types of creatures, the photograph shows only something that appears snakelike. A third Canadian lake monster is said to live in Saskatchewan's Turtle Lake.

Another well-known legendary lake monster is Champ, or Champy, of Lake Champlain, which lies in both Canada and the United States. Lake Erie, which also has shores on both sides of the border, has South Bay Bessie, a monster that has been reported in northern Ohio since the mid-1980s. There are a few reports of monsters living in the other Great Lakes as well.

South America has at least one lake monster. Nahuelito of Lake Nuhuel Huapi in Argentina was first reported in 1897. Today, the lake is a tourist destination for those who hope to spot the monster.

A lake monster is said to live in Lake Van, Turkey's largest body of water, and Kazakhstan's Lake Kos Kol is home to another. In China, there is said to be an amphibious monster nicknamed Chan, which means "toad," living somewhere at the bottom of a water-filled gorge in Hubei Province.

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See also: Champ/Champy.

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Lang, Andrew

(1844–1912)

Scottish author Andrew Lang was a journalist, poet, novelist, and critic. He is best remembered as a folklorist and for his twelve-volume collection of fairy tales, each of which was titled after the color of its cover. The first volume, *The Blue Fairy Book,* was published in 1889, and the last, *The Lilac Fairy Book,* was published in 1910.

Lang was born on March 31, 1844, in Selkirk, Scotland, and was educated in Edinburgh and at Oxford. He moved to London in 1875 and spent most of his adult life there. He became a popular journalist and literary critic, and quickly became friends with some of London's great authors, including Robert Louis Stevenson.

Lang's work as a folklorist included a collaboration with S.H. Butcher. Lang and Butcher translated Homer's *Odyssey* in 1879. With Walter Leaf and Ernest Myers, they translated the *Iliad* in 1883. Lang was one of the first to apply anthropological findings to the study of myth and folklore, in works that included *Custom and Myth* (1884), *Myth, Ritual, and Religion* (1887), and *The Making of Religion* (1898).

Lang's twelve fairy books have been available continually since they were first published.

Andrew Lang died on July 12, 1912.

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Lange Wapper

(Flemish)

Lange Wapper is a trickster from Flemish folklore who is said to live near the city of Antwerp. The earliest known stories about Lange Wapper date from about the sixteenth century, although there may have been earlier tales that are now lost.

Lange Wapper is a shape-shifter who can alter his size from as small as a child to as tall as a giant. He prefers to live near water. He has turned up on the Belgian coast and also likes to wander among dikes on the Nete River. But his favorite site appears to be the banks of the Scheldt River in Antwerp.

Lang Wapper torments humans but rarely does them serious harm. He teases them by leaping over their houses, peering into their windows, or bending down over the roads to scare them. He particularly likes to play tricks on drunkards, who are easy prey. One thing that gives away Lang Wapper's identity is his lack of a shadow.

The giant-sized Lange Wapper once strode to the coast, picked up a fishing boat by the mast, and threw it away. No one knows what triggered his anger. When he is as small as a child, he sometimes plays with children, pretending to be one of them and teaching them naughty tricks.

Lange Wapper also likes to trick women and get close to them. He once took the shape of a pretty handkerchief to get into a woman's pocket. He has been known to change into a newborn baby. If a woman hugs the "poor foundling" to her breast, Lange Wapper drops the disguise.

In 1963, Lange Wapper was honored in Antwerp with a bronze statue created by Albert Poels. The statue is of a huge man lording it over two small humans. The character has

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inspired several artists and has appeared in the Suske and Wiske comic book *De Zwarte Madam* (*The Black Lady*).

See also: Tricksters.

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Lares and Penates

(Roman)

The Lares and Penates were the pre-Christian Roman guardian spirits, small deities of the house and field. The concept of the Lares is thought by scholars to have derived from an ancient Latin ancestor cult in which the deceased head of the household was thought to bless the house and keep the family fields fertile.

This shrine to the Roman household gods is in the House of Vetii in Pompeii, Italy. Two Lares flank the Genius, or guardian spirit, as all three perform a religious ritual. *(Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY)*

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By the time of the Roman Empire, at the turn of the first millennium C.E., there were believed to be many types of Lares, each with a specific guardianship role. Some of the most important types are:

- Lares compitales: guardians of the crossroads.
- Lares domestici: guardians of the house.
- Lares familiares: guardians of the family.
- Lares permarini: guardians of the sea.
- Lares praestitis: guardians of the Roman state.
- Lares rurales: guardians of the land or fields.
- Lares viales: guardians of travelers.

The Lares usually were depicted as dancing young men, each holding a horn cup in one hand and a bowl in the other. They often were accompanied by snakes, representing fertility. The Lares were worshipped in small shrines, called Lararium, which could be found in every Roman house. Food was sacrificed to the Lares on holidays. The direct opposite of the Lares, and their deadly foes, were the Larvae, or Lemures, which were malevolent spirits.

The Penates are related to the Lares in that they were household protective beings. Like the Lares, they were worshipped in every house, although the Penates's original role had primarily been as guardians of the storeroom. A family generally would have one Lare and two Penates figures sharing the household shrine. The family members would make offerings taken from their daily meals to the Penates at the hearth, since the Penates were closely linked to Vesta, the Roman goddess of the hearth.

The Roman state was said to have its own Penates, the Penates publici. Tradition claimed that they had been brought from Troy during the time of its downfall by the mythic hero Aeneas, prince of Troy and ancestor of Rome.

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Lemminkainen

(Finnish)

In the Finnish epic *Kalevala,* Lemminkainen is a handsome and brave, yet flawed young hero.

Lemminkainen set out to woo the maiden Kyllikki, while still flirting with other young women. He carried Kyllikki off and married her but quickly grew tired of his young wife.

Lemminkainen abandoned Kyllikki and pursued the Maiden of Pohjola, the daughter of Louhi. He managed to charm the citizens of Pohjola with his magical singing, save for one person, a cowherd, who did not fall under his spell.

When Lemminkainen asked Louhi for her daughter's hand, she responded that he must hunt and kill the demon's elk, the demon's fire-breathing gelding, and finally the swan in the Tuonela River, which was the boundary between this world and the next. Lemminkainen completed the first two challenges, but, at the Tuonela River, the cowherd ambushed and killed him.

The cowherd cut up Lemminkainen's body and threw the pieces into the river. Lemminkainen's mother, who had been warned of her son's death, hunted for him. She raked the pieces of her son's body out of the Tuonela River and put them back together, restoring him to life.

Still Lemminkainen had not learned his lesson. The master smith, Ilmarinen, had by this time won the Maiden of Pohjola. Lemminkainen arrived at the wedding banquet uninvited and started trouble, killing the master of Pohjola.

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Lemminkainen fled Pohjola and hid for a time on Saari Island, home of his forgotten wife, Kyllikki. Upon his return, he found his house burned down and his mother in hiding. Lemminkainen knew this tragedy was the work of the people of Pohjola. He set out to seek revenge, but Louhi cast a cold spell that froze the sea and forced Lemminkainen to return home once again.

See also: *Kalevala.*

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Leprechauns

(Irish)

In Irish folklore and folk belief, leprechauns are small fairy beings. They serve as cobblers for the fairy folk who often possess a treasure in gold.

While the leprechaun may be a cobbler, he apparently makes only one shoe at a time, never a pair. The name *leprechaun* may come from the Gaelic *leith brogan,* or maker of one shoe. It may also come from *luacharma'n,* a Gaelic word meaning pygmy. The *clurichan* is a similar type of small fairy being that may be related to the leprechaun but is generally portrayed as drunken and morose.

Leprechauns generally are described as merry, slightly heavy little men dressed in old-fashioned clothes, perhaps of sixteenth- or seventeenth-century country style, the color usually green, with a red cap, a leather cobbler's apron, and nicely buckled shoes. There are female leprechauns, but they rarely appear in folktales and never in conjunction with humans.

According to popular belief, a human who is quick and clever enough to actually catch a leprechaun can gain the leprechaun's golden treasure. But catching a leprechaun is an almost impossible feat for a human to achieve, especially since the moment he or she blinks or looks away, the leprechaun will be gone.

One of the most common tales of this sort involves a young man, often named Tom, who actually does manage to seize a leprechaun who promises to give him gold. The leprechaun adds that the gold is buried under a particular patch of weeds, or corn, or wheat, and that there is too much for anyone to carry off without a wagon. The leprechaun promises not to magic the gold away or to bewitch the site, so Tom ties a ribbon around the plants as a marker and hurries off to get his wagon. When he returns, sure enough, the leprechaun has not touched his ribbon—but has tied identical ribbons around every plant in the field. Tom has been good and truly tricked.

Leprechauns also have been featured as characters in novels, plays, and motion pictures. One of the most memorable appearances was in the 1947 musical *Finian's Rainbow,* in which a leprechaun-turned-human is a major character. Perhaps the most disturbing movie appearance was in the 2002 horror movie *Leprechaun,* in which the leprechaun is a monster.

See also: Tricksters; *Retelling: A Leprechaun's Gold.*

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Leshy/Leshiye

(Slavic)

In Slavic mythology and folklore, a *leshy* was a nature spirit, both the lord of the forest and its heart, as well as a trickster.

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As changeable as nature, a leshy varied his appearance as often as he pleased. A leshy might be as tall as a tree or so small that he could slip under a blade of grass. He might be a whirlwind of leaves, an owl, a wolf, or even an old man clad in fur.

It was easier to hear than to see a leshy. His voice might imitate the rustle of the leaves or the sighing of the wind in the trees. With alluring or tempting calls he also could entice humans off safe forest paths. The leshy did this for fun, although this trickster's idea of fun could endanger or even kill humans.

Once a human realized he or she had lost the path, the only hope for escape was to make the leshy laugh. The simplest way to do this was to strip and put every item of clothing back on, either inside out or backward. A leshy found this silliness irresistibly funny, and the human would hear laughter and find himself or herself suddenly returned to the familiar path. But should a human be foolish enough to truly anger a leshy, there was no escape. The unfortunate were led into the deep forest and tickled to death.

The leshy, like other forest beings, was attuned to the seasons and hibernated during the winter. When he awoke in the spring, the leshy was at his most dangerous, running wild and nearly mindless with primal joy. Women were in particular peril at such a time, since the leshy would rape any woman he found in his path. In the summer, the leshy was in a less dangerous frame of mind. Summer was when he played his tricks on humans but rarely harmed them. In the autumn, the leshy might be more quarrelsome, wanting to fight and frighten off any wild creatures that got too close.

It was believed that two leshiye might gamble to see who would win a prize of squirrels. Every now and again, squirrels in the Russian woods actually do migrate from one forest to another. The sight of such mass migrations, according to folk beliefs, meant that one leshy had lost a bet to another and had forfeited his squirrels.

See also: Adroanzi; Tree Spirits; Tricksters.

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Liderc

(Hungarian)

In Hungarian folklore, the Liderc is said to be a small but dangerous devil. This nasty creature can provide a change of pace for storytellers from the true vampires that are often featured in traditional horror tales. But beware—some elements of this being's nature are suitable for adult audiences only.

The Liderc is said in the folktales to be similar in its desires to a vampire, feeding off the living. But the Liderc also shares aspects with the succubus in that it kills its victims through sexual exhaustion and drinks not blood, as a vampire does, but the life energies of its victims.

It is said to hatch from the first egg of a black hen. But the egg must be incubated under a willing human's armpit. The Liderc can, according to the tales, take different forms, or at least cast the illusion of taking different forms: a man, a woman, an animal, or even a ball of light.

In addition to its vampirelike drives, stories say that the Liderc is best known for eagerly carrying out tasks for whatever human is its master. This master is usually the human that hatched the Liderc, and the Liderc brings its master wealth. But there is supposedly a problem with keeping a Liderc as a servant. The Liderc is a quick and efficient servant, but it always must be kept busy with numerous tasks to occupy it, or it will become bored and dangerous, and even turn on its master.

The Liderc apparently can be kept at bay for a time by garlic, like a traditional vampire, but there is no sure way listed in the folktales to slay it. The only way to safely get rid of the Liderc is to give it some impossible task, such as spinning ropes out of sand, or counting every star, so that it either has to give up or die of

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sheer rage. This is a folk motif it shares with other devils.

See also: Vampires.

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Little Iliad

(Greek)

The *Little Iliad* is a Greek epic that may have been written in the seventh century B.C.E., but the manuscript has been lost. Fortunately, the work was completely summarized in a fifth-century work, the *Chrestomatheia,* possibly written by the Greek philosopher Proclus Diadochus. It is this summary that is of interest to storytellers, since it gives details of the story of the Trojan War that are not included in Homer's *Iliad.*

The *Little Iliad* continues close to the point at which the *Iliad* leaves off, beginning just after the death of Achilles during the Trojan War. As the story opens, Achilles's armor was to be awarded to the greatest Greek hero. The noble warriors Aias (Ajax) and Odysseus were both candidates for that honor. Odysseus had recovered Achilles's body in battle, and so the armor was awarded to him. Aias, unable to bear the rage and jealousy he felt, went mad soon after this decision and committed suicide.

Odysseus went on to capture the Trojan prophet Helenos, one of the princes of Troy. Helenos was forced by the Greeks to make prophecies concerning what must be done before the Greeks could conquer Troy. Following the demands of the prophecies, Odysseus and Diomedes went to Lemnos to find the hero Philoktetes. They brought him to Troy, where he fought and killed Paris.

Odysseus also brought Achilles's son Neoptolemos to Troy, where Odysseus gave him Achilles's armor. The ghost of Achilles appeared to his son to encourage him. When the Trojan warrior Eurypylos dominated the battlefield, Neoptolemos killed him.

Now Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, slipped into Troy as a spy. Helen recognized him but kept his secret, and Odysseus returned safely to the Athenian encampment.

With guidance from the goddess Athena, the Greeks built the wooden horse and placed their best warriors inside it. Then, they burned their camp and withdrew to a nearby island, Tenedos. The story ends as the Trojans, believing that the Greeks had departed for good, breached a section of their city wall to bring the horse inside and celebrated their apparent victory.

See also: *Iliad.*

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Local Legends

Local legends are folk narratives with distinct characteristic markers, including a setting that is identifiable and local; extraordinary, sometimes supernatural, situations that have occurred within recent historical memory; and characters who are purportedly known to the teller.

The events found in local legends are a reflection of an uncertain world. Stories often feature murder, supernatural retribution, ghosts, UFOs, humanlike creatures or monsters, and related motifs. Some local legends, especially topographical legends, are specific to a particular region or neighborhood. Others apply widely known story patterns to local places.

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The Hermit's Curse

The following legend incorporates the features of a familiar setting, history, dark tone, supernatural possibilities, and the teller's uncertainty about the story:

> The town of Bucksport has a strange story. The tombstone of Mayor Buck has a stain shaped like a leg. Long ago, he hung a hermit for the murder and dismemberment of someone, but the hermit claimed innocence. One of the murder victim's legs was never found. Before being hung, the hermit screamed, "That leg will follow you to your grave!" After the mayor died, the stain on his tombstone appeared. They polished it out many times, but it always came back. I don't know about that, but you can still see the stain, whatever it is.

Local legends are passed on by tellers who believe that there is a supernatural basis to an event as well as by those who are skeptical or noncommittal. For example, in the various tellings of the hermit story, a leg-shaped discoloration does mark Mayor Buck's stone. Some tellers say the stain was always there, others say it appeared after the hermit's curse, and sometimes tellers switch positions at different times, based on audience reaction.

Sociological Focus

Local legends may be used to point out the aberrant behaviors of certain people or groups, or even provide a scapegoat for a societal problem. People who are perceived to have unusual habits may be accused in local legend of negative behavior, such as witchcraft. By telling such legends, a group establishes appropriate behavior by contrasting it with peculiar behavior.

In extreme cases, a legend can provide a scapegoat. Society perceives that its troubles are caused by an individual or a group, and dehumanizes the individual or the group's members in legend through extreme accusations of heinous behaviors, such as child abduction, cannibalism, murder, Satanism, and so on. During stressful times, the implication of a scapegoat can serve to relieve anxieties and justify persecution, sometimes with tragic results, as has been evidenced by the persecution of various minority ethnic and religious groups throughout history.

Place Legends

Often the main focus of a local legend is a physical place. Two types of places might be featured: generic place types and topographic places.

Generic places may be unusual geological formations, odd houses, lonely roads, or dangerous places. Such place legends often focus on inexplicable events.

Topographic places, not necessarily associated with strangeness, are those that have been named by settlers to commemorate events later forgotten, such as Bearkill Creek. In this type, the place's name is all that remains of the legend. Place names also can encode practical information about the land: Folly Cove, in Cape Ann, Massachusetts, bears the brunt of winds and waves, so it is "folly" to build a wharf there, as stories of lost wharves suggest.

Historical Events

Place legends often feature historical events. For example, in Ireland, the story "Fleming's Folly" tells of a tower built by a plantation landlord. One legend humiliates Fleming by claiming that he tried to build the tower to see the ocean. This was a foolish goal, since the ocean was obviously too far away. In another legend, the tower was used to watch for horse thieves, and in another, Fleming commissioned the building of the tower to employ the jobless poor.

These legends serve a diverse community. They air various positions for the locals, who comprise descendants of both oppressed natives and colonial settlers. Legend can reshape

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history, using the past to benefit people in the present.

Some unusual archaeological sites are so old that their history cannot be confirmed. Explanations for these places can be pure invention, functioning like science in providing a folk hypothesis. For example, England's Stonehenge has accrued many legends that attribute it to the work of giants or the wizard Merlin.

Whatever the place, topographical names and legends are important in forming the local folk identity. Clearly, the study of local legends involves psychological, cognitive, historical, communicative, and anthropological factors. Such a study can provide insight into society and its narratives.

Wade Tarzia

See also: Urban Legends.

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Lorelei

(German)

In German medieval folklore, the Lorelei is a rock as well as a dangerous singer who lures men to their deaths.

According to the lore, the Lorelei was once a lovely young woman who was betrayed by her faithless lover. Despairing, she hurled herself off a high rock into the Rhine River to drown. But instead of finding true death, she was transformed into a nonhuman being, a beautiful sirenlike singer whose favorite perch was the rock that bears her name.

The Lorelei's enchanting song lured sailors to their deaths on the rocks below the Rhine's cliffs. In this vengeful role, the Lorelei was similar to the sirens of Greek mythology and to the wronged women of folklore who became vengeful spirits, such as the Slavic *rusalka*.

See also: Mermaids; Sirens.

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Louhi

(Finnish)

In Finnish mythology, Louhi is the mistress of the bleak, cold realm of Pohjola.

Louhi was a cross between a folkloric witch and a hag, with magical powers and shapeshifting abilities. She had the hag or shamanlike ability to shut away the Sun and Moon in a cave, and she could control the northern cold.

Louhi had an attractive daughter, never named but merely called the Maiden of Pohjola. Any suitor who sought the maiden's hand was given three near-impossible tasks to complete.

Only once was Louhi defeated. The wizard Vainamoinen, together with the wonder-smith Ilmarinen, stole the magic *sampo* (mill) that Ilmarinen had made for Louhi. In the shape of a huge bird, Louhi pursued their boat. The rocks she dropped on them sent the sampo plunging into the sea, where it continues to grind out salt.

See also: *Kalevala*.

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Lugalbanda

(Sumerian)

Lugalbanda was the third king of Uruk, an ancient Sumerian city (in present-day Iraq). He and his wife, the goddess Ninsun, were the parents of Gilgamesh, who became the most famous of all Sumerian kings. Lugalbanda, who was eventually deified, is said to have ruled for 1,200 years. The kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur (c. 2111–2004 B.C.E.) considered Lugalbanda and Ninsun to be their divine parents.

The young Lugalbanda was celebrated in several Sumerian heroic narrative poems. He is the main character in two epic texts: *Lugalbanda and the Mountain Cave* and *Lugalbanda and the Thunderbird.*

The earliest Lugalbanda myth, which dates to the middle of the third millennium B.C.E., exists only as a short fragment. It describes Lugalbanda's wedding ceremony in the eastern mountains and the couple's return to the city of Uruk.

Lugalbanda and the Mountain Cave

Lugalbanda and the Mountain Cave, which probably dates to the Third Dynasty of Ur, takes place in a legendary ancient time after heaven had been separated from Earth, kingship was established, and the peoples of Mesopotamia were blessed with long life.

The king at that time was Enmerkar, the son of the sun god, Utu. He and his eight brothers prepared an expedition to subdue the rebel mountain kingdom of Aratta (in present-day Iran). After seven days, the brothers and their army entered the mountains, but Lugalbanda, the youngest of the nine brothers, fell seriously ill.

No one could help Lugalbanda, and it was not possible to bring him back home. His body had stopped moving, his breathing was minimal, and his brothers and friends thought he would not survive. A cave was found, and Lugalbanda was left there as the troops moved on. His condition remained grave for days.

When the illness began to ebb, Lugalbanda prayed to Utu for assistance. The gods answered his prayers and gave him back his life. The hero stood and emerged from the mountain cave.

Lugalbanda then set out in pursuit of his companions. He roamed the mountains, but there was not a single person to be seen. Lost, he ate plants and drank from the streams, captured and ate wild animals, made a fire, baked his own dough, and made offerings to his gods.

What remains of this composition is fragmentary. It includes descriptions of demons and the wise elders of the city, but there is no known ending.

Lugalbanda and the Thunderbird

Lugalbanda and the Thunderbird begins, once again, as Lugalbanda and Enmerkar's army traveled from Uruk to Aratta. Lugalbanda became separated from the group in the Zabu Mountains. He formulated a plan to find the nest of the ferocious bird Anzu, gain the creature's favor, and solicit its help in escaping the mountains.

Lugalbanda came upon the nest of the terrifying Anzu bird, but he found only a fledgling inside. The monster bird with the claws of an eagle and the teeth of a shark was away hunting wild bulls for its young.

Lugalbanda decided to befriend the Anzu's chick in order to find favor with its father and claim a reward. He carefully kneaded dough, added honey to it, and fed it to the young nestling. He also gave the baby salt meat and sheep's fat to eat, popping the food into its beak. Lugalbanda further indulged the chick by painting its eyes with kohl to beautify them and dabbing white cedar scent onto its head.

Lugalbanda's Reward

Returning to the nest, the Anzu bird called to the fledgling, but the chick did not answer

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him. The Anzu called a second time and again received no answer. The great bird, afraid that its young had been stolen, let out a cry that reached up to the heavens.

But arriving at the nest, the Anzu found it brilliantly festooned with the chick inside, its eyes painted and cedar fixed on its head. The Anzu was overjoyed and promised to befriend whoever had aided the young bird.

Lugalbanda presented himself to the Anzu, who offered numerous destinies. Lugalbanda would accept none. Frustrated, the Anzu agreed to grant the hero whatever he wished. Lugalbanda replied that he desired only great power and endurance for his feet, so that he could run great distances in a short time, and great strength for his arms. Anzu agreed and granted the wish on the condition that the hero would not reveal the source of his gifts.

Lugalbanda's Return

Lugalbanda used the great strength in his legs and arms to rejoin his brothers. Finding his way through the mountains and into their camp, Lugalbanda appeared to the men like one who had stepped forth from heaven to Earth.

The men had given Lugalbanda up for dead and were astonished to see him. They were equally amazed that he could have crossed through the mountains and waters alone. They asked him how he had accomplished such an impossible journey, and Lugalbanda, heeding the Anzu's request not to reveal the source of his magical powers, cleverly evaded their questions. Lugalbanda and the troops moved on.

When Enmerkar's army reached Aratta, a battle ensued. Their siege of the city continued for a year. Finally, Enmerkar began to despair. He prepared to send a message to the goddess Inanna in Uruk to ask whether she had abandoned him, causing his failure in this fight. He called for a volunteer to make the perilous journey back to the city. Lugalbanda came forward on the condition that he travel to Uruk alone. Enmerkar agreed.

With the strength and swiftness given to him by the Anzu bird, Lugalbanda crossed the seven mountains in one day and arrived in Uruk by midnight. He reported the war situation to Inanna and relayed his lord's message: If she would agree to call off the siege and bring the army home, Enmerkar pledged to give up warfare.

Inanna received her visitor warmly and explained how Enmerkar's army could overcome the forces of Aratta. She stated that there existed in Uruk a certain sacred "water-meadow" with fish in it. One of the fish was special. Lugalbanda was to tell Enmerkar to go to the pool and cut down a tamarisk tree that grew on the bank. He was then to fashion it into a water bucket. Enmerkar would use the bucket to catch the special fish, cook it, garnish it, and bring it as a sacrifice to Inanna. Enmerkar's troops would then triumph, for the fish was the life-strength of Aratta.

The story ends with praise to Lugalbanda, the pure one.

Ira Spar

See also: Culture Heroes.

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Lullabies

Lullabies are simple, soothing melodies that are sung to children to help them fall asleep. Lullabies can be divided into two categories: folklore and literary, or composed.

The folklore lullaby is the first folklore a child encounters. These songs, passed down through generations, include soothing elements and descriptions of ritual protection. Often,

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supernatural protective figures, such as angels, feature in the lyrics. In some countries, including certain regions in Russia, lyrics include protective items or ritual blessings. Other folk lullabies, such as some from Norway, may include references to family protectors rather than supernatural ones.

Literary, or composed, lullabies also mention supernatural protectors. One example is the lullaby by German composer Engelbert Humperdinck (1854–1921), written for his opera *Hansel and Gretel,* which was first performed in 1893: "When I lay me down to sleep, / Fourteen angels round me creep."

Some composed lullabies do not have lyrics, such as the classic *Lullaby* by Johannes Brahms (1833–1897). Words were added to Brahms's melody long after it was written, and several versions are known today.

Alternatively, a lullaby, whether folk or literary, simply may contain references to home, family, friends, and pets. Perhaps the most famous lullaby in the English language is the North American *Rock-a-bye, Baby*:

Rock-a-bye, baby, on the treetop.
When the wind blows, the cradle
will rock.
When the bough breaks, the cradle
will fall,
And down will come baby, cradle and all.

The combination of soothing melody and rather ominous words makes this an odd lullaby. Theories abound as to its origin: Does it hold a hint of some political satire about an administration about to fall? Or was it simply composed by a mother at the end of her patience?

See also: Nursery Rhymes.

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Lusiads, The

(Portuguese)

The Portuguese epic *Os Lusiadas* (*The Lusiads*) tells the story of Vasco de Gama's discovery of the sea route to India. Written by Luiz Vas de Camoëns in the sixteenth century, the poem gets its name from Lusitania, the Latin name for Portugal.

The Life of Camoëns

Camoëns led a life of epic proportions. He was born in Lisbon in 1524, lost his father by shipwreck in infancy, and was educated at the University of Coimbra. On leaving the university, Camoëns appeared at court, but a love affair with the Dona Catarina de Atayde, whom the king also loved, caused his banishment to Santarem. There, he began writing *The Lusiads,* and he continued working on it during an expedition against the Moors in Africa.

Sent out by John III, Camoëns displayed much valor in battle and lost an eye. He was recalled to court, but court jealousies soon drove him to India in 1553. As he left, he exclaimed, "Ungrateful country, thou shall not possess my bones."

In India Camoëns's bravery and accomplishments won him friends, but he was soon exiled to China when new court jealousies arose. There, he accumulated a small fortune and finished his poem.

Eventually, happier circumstances permitted Camoëns to return to India. On the journey home, the ship laden with his fortune sank, and Camoëns escaped with only his poem.

After sixteen years of misfortune abroad, Camoëns returned to Lisbon in 1569. The plague that was then raging through Europe delayed the publication of *The Lusiads* until 1572, when it received little attention. A small pension was bestowed on the poet, but it soon was withdrawn. The unfortunate Camoëns was left to die in an almshouse.

On his deathbed, Camoëns bemoaned the impending fate of his country (its conquest by

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Spain), saying, "I have loved my country. I have returned not only to die on her bosom, but to die with her."

The Lusiads

The Lusiads is divided into ten cantos of rhymed stanzas. It gives a somewhat fantastical but mostly realistic account of da Gama's voyage.

The sailors under the command of Prince Henry of Portugal, commander of the Portuguese forces in Africa, had discovered the Cape of Storms, which the prince renamed the Cape of Good Hope. Henry's successor, Emmanuel, was determined to carry out the work of his predecessor by sending da Gama to undertake the discovery of the southern passage to India.

The Portuguese generally were hostile to the undertaking, but da Gama, his brother, and his friend Coello gathered together a crew. Several members of the party were malefactors whose death sentences were reversed on condition that they undertake the voyage.

The fantasy elements in *The Lusiads* are mythological allusions that imitate Homer and Virgil, but the strength of the work is Camoëns's own passion for his country and its former glory. Since the epic's subject is so straightforward, it is amazing that out of such unpromising material Camoëns was able to construct a poem of such interest. He could not have done so had he not been so strong a patriot.

The Lusiads sometimes is called the epic of commerce. Perhaps it would be more appropriately described as the epic of patriotism.

See also: Epics.

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Lutin

(French)

The *lutin,* a small, mischievous, shape-shifting being, is the French answer to the British Puck, a trickster who loves to play pranks on unsuspecting humans. His pranks almost never lead to injury, just embarrassment on the part of the human.

Tales of the lutin can be found both in France and in French Canada, and can liven up a storyteller's repertoire. However, a storyteller striving for authenticity should note that in modern French, the word *lutin* is sometimes misapplied to any fairy being.

Since the lutin is a shape-shifter, the tales say that a shepherd or farmer never knew when he might appear; the lutin could change himself into a man, woman, or child, a stick, a goat, or a plowshare. Indeed, the only shape he could not take was that of a needle. He could transform himself into a needle, but try as he might, he never was able to imitate the hole, so any woman would have found him out the moment she began to sew.

The lutin, the tales say, preferred to work his pranks at night, when no one was awake to get in his way. He might decide to unfasten the cows, wait until the humans got the cows back in their stalls, and then release them again. Or he might decide to spend the night plaiting up the mane and tail of every horse, or even braiding two tails together for the humans to unfasten. The lutin also liked to scare people out walking at night.

According to one story, a man was passing along the bank of a stream in the evening, when he noticed a sheep bleating loudly. Thinking it must have strayed from the flock, and that he had better take it home with him until he could discover its owner, he lifted the animal onto his back and staggered on his way.

Then a voice suddenly asked, "Where are you?"

From the sheep came the answer, "On the back of a donkey!"

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The man dropped the sheep and ran. As he ran, he heard a laugh from behind him and knew he had been tricked by a lutin.

Another story tells of the lutin going after a young woman who was looking for colored thread to sew her new gown (a second version says it was a wedding dress). She was delighted to find, lying on the side of the road, a large ball of colored thread. It matched the cloth perfectly, and she hastily sewed the gown together with it.

The young woman decided to wear the gown to church (the second version says it was on her wedding day). But as soon as she took the first step into the church, her fine dress fell to pieces. The fine colored thread had completely vanished—it had been a lutin's trick.

See also: Tricksters.

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Lyonesse

(British)

In the folklore of Cornwall, England, Lyonesse was a land that was lost beneath the waves. Unlike Brittany's sunken city of Ys, Lyonesse and its sinking were not associated with any sins by its inhabitants, and the story may refer to an actual historical disaster.

According to the stories, the land of Lyonesse once lay on the coast of Cornwall, beyond Land's End. It was said to host prosperous cities and many churches.

On November 11, 1099, a great storm swept the sea up over the land, drowning the people and submerging the entire kingdom under the waves. All that was left of Lyonesse were the Isles of Scilly and one survivor. This survivor, Trevilian, had ridden his white horse to high ground just in time and taken shelter in a cave. He watched Lyonesse vanish under the sea. The Trevilian family coat of arms still bears a white horse emerging from blue water.

Some traditions link Lyonesse with Arthurian legend. One folk belief claims that Lyonesse was ruled over by the father of Tristan, and that the land sank while Tristan was still at King Mark's court. Most of the Arthurian tales, however, give Liones as the name of Tristan's homeland. This may derive from Leoneis, or Lothian, or even a region of Brittany called Leonais.

Other Arthurian traditions name Lyonesse as the site where the mortally wounded King Arthur was taken after he fell in his last battle, linking Lyonesse with the magical island of Avalon. It also is said that Mordred pursued Arthur's army into Lyonesse, but the ghost of Merlin sank the land and destroyed Mordred's forces.

A sixteenth-century scholar of antiquities, William Camden, collected a number of stories from the Cornish people. Camden reported that some of the local people called the Seven Stones reef off Land's End the City of Lions, or Lyonesse. The locals also claimed to be able to hear the bells of the drowned city ringing out during stormy seas.

As late as the twentieth century, people still reported hearing the bells and claimed to have seen part of the city under the waves. The latter is easily and less romantically explained as ancient remains of field boundaries, since part of Cornwall is now underwater.

There is to date no solid evidence that this magnificent land of legend ever existed.

See also: Sunken Cities; Ys/Ker-Ys.

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Maat

(Egyptian)

The Egyptian goddess called Maat embodied *maat,* which is an ancient Egyptian term meaning "truth, order, justice, and balance."

The goddess symbolized correct order on a personal, social, or cosmic level, and the reward for maintaining such order. All individuals, including the king, were expected to live in accordance with maat.

Maat's symbol was a feather, and she was usually depicted as a woman wearing one on her head. Defeated enemies who faced being slaughtered by the king are shown in illustrations clutching a feather of Maat, which indicated their surrender to righteousness. In the court of Osiris, which was called the Hall of Maaty (Hall of Two Truths), Anubis, the god of the dead, weighed the heart of the deceased against a feather to determine whether the deceased would enter the blissful afterlife or be consumed by the monster Ammut.

Another symbol of Maat was an object that represented either a parcel of land or the base of a throne—a visual depiction of maat as the foundation of the universe. Sometimes, Maat appeared as this object with a woman's head.

The scribal god, Thoth, often is depicted carrying an image of Maat. Beginning in the early fifteenth century B.C.E., around the time of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, the king would ritually present a small figure of the goddess Maat to a god. Many gods stood as recipient of this offering, including Amun, Atum, Horus, Osiris, Ptah, Re, Thoth, and even the god of chaos, Seth. Through this ritual, the king demonstrated his legitimacy by literally upholding truth.

Private individuals also offered maat to the sun god, Re. During the nineteenth dynasty (c. 1315–1201 B.C.E.), the goddess became more closely associated with the afterlife than with the ethics of daily life. She acquired titles such as "Mistress of Heaven Who Is in the West" and "She Who Satisfies the Necropolis." To say one was "joined with Maat" was a euphemistic expression meaning that one had died. When the deceased received funerary offerings of bread, beer, wine, and ointment, they were said to have Maat placed before them.

Noreen Doyle

See also: Tefnut.

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Maat, the Egyptian goddess of truth and order, is seen here on a painted wall relief. On Maat's head is a feather, the symbol of truth. In ancient Egypt, the heart of the deceased was weighed against the feather. If the person had a pure heart, the scales would balance, and the deceased would be allowed into the afterworld. *(Scala/Art Resource, NY)*

MacDonald, George

(1824–1905)

George MacDonald was a Scottish novelist known for his works in the fantasy genre. MacDonald was one of the first to write fantasy for adults, and his influence can be seen in the work of such later writers as C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien.

George MacDonald was born in the district of Aberdeenshire, Scotland, on December 10, 1824. The son of a farmer, he was born into a Calvinist family, whose religion proved too dour for MacDonald's taste. After earning his degree at the University of Aberdeen, MacDonald moved to London and studied at Highbury College, hoping to become a Congregational minister.

In 1850, MacDonald was appointed pastor of Trinity Congregational Church in Arundel. His sermons about God's universal love and the possibility that no one would be damned were so unpopular in those hellfire and brimstone days that his salary was cut by half.

Poor health led MacDonald to leave England for a brief visit to the hot, dry climate of Algiers in North Africa. Restored, he returned to London, converted to Anglicanism, taught for a time, and then wrote and lectured in England and the United States.

MacDonald's works include the fantasy novels *Phantastes* (1858), *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871), *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872), and *Lilith* (1895), and fairy tales such as "The Light Princess" and "The Golden Key." He said of his work that he wrote not for children but for the childlike at any age.

MacDonald also wrote many mainstream novels and a good deal of poetry. He was a contemporary of Lewis Carroll (the pseudonym of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson), and it was MacDonald's advice (and the fact that his children loved the manuscript) that convinced Carroll that *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) was worthy of publication.

See also: Fantasy.

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Magi

(Persian)

Few facts are known about the Magi of ancient Persia, the land that is now Iran, but some scholars believe they were a caste of priests from the Medes tribe.

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The Magi were widely known in the lands surrounding the Mediterranean as wise men. The link in people's minds between wisdom and the supernatural soon gave rise to a folk belief that the Magi had power over demons. The word *Magi* shares its roots with the modern word *magic*.

Perhaps the most familiar reference to the Magi comes in the Gospel according to Matthew in the New Testament. The Magi visited the baby Jesus and presented gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Although the gospel does not specify how many Magi attended, folklore claims they were three in number, and they are generally referred to as the Three Wise Men. In Western tradition, the three were named Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar, while Eastern Christians call them Larvandad, Hormisdas, and Gushnasaph.

Zoroaster, the great religious sage and leader, who is also known as Zarathustra, may have been one of the Magi. The religion that he formed, Zoroastrianism, which became the dominant religion of Persia, was led by Magian priests.

In 637 C.E., Arabs invaded Persia, and Islam replaced Zoroastrianism in the region. But the Parsee religion, sometimes called Farsi, is a direct descendant of Zoroastrianism and is still practiced in modern Iran and India.

See also: Magic Incantations and Spells.

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Magic Incantations and Spells

An incantation is a formula that is spoken or sung and is used in the working of magic. A spell is similar to an incantation, except that it generally adds specific gestures or ritual items, such as a magic wand.

An incantation generally invokes benevolent supernatural beings for help, in the form of either protection or inspiration. An incantation also may serve to ward off the effects of evil spirits. When used in black magic, however, an incantation may be the means of summoning or materializing the powers of darkness.

Most incantations are composed in poetic form and utilize several aspects of traditional oral literature, including formulaic composition, repetition, and alliteration. Many incantations contain what appear to be nonsense words. These may be corruptions of ancient or foreign words or deliberate strings of sounds.

Stories featuring incantations go back to the earliest written records from Sumer and Egypt and can be found in any culture that includes magic in its folklore. In the story of Taliesin, from the Welsh *Mabinogion,* the witch Ceredwyn recites incantations over her cauldron as she brews a potion of wisdom. In the Western European versions of "Sleeping Beauty," it is the good fairy's incantation that counters the evil spell, turning a curse of death into sleep followed by a happy awakening. The giant in the folktale "Jack and the Beanstalk" recites what is almost certainly a corrupted incantation—"Fee, fie, fo, fum / I smell the blood of an Englishman."

Artists and musicians also have been inspired by incantations. The eighteenth-century Spanish artist Francisco Goya created a painting titled *The Incantation* (1797–1798), which portrays a frightening scene of an incantation being cast.

Spells can cover many subjects, from helpful to dangerous, and often are divided into the categories of white, or beneficial, magic, and black, or harmful, magic. Protection, blessing, healing spells, and spells to remove harmful spells fall under the category of white magic. Black magic spells include curses, spells of coercion, and even death spells. There also are gray spells, which include love, gambling, and prosperity spells.

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See also: Black Magic; Magi; White Magic; Wizards.

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Magician and His Pupil/Magician's Apprentice

The tale of the magician and his pupil, also known as the magician's apprentice, is a particularly widespread world folktale that can be found throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa, as well as in the Americas. In its most basic form, a boy learns magic, particularly the ability to shift his shape, from a jealous or otherwise dangerous magician, and then uses that magic to outwit and defeat the magician.

There are two common versions of the basic tale. In the first version, a father gives (or sells) his son to a magician to be the magician's apprentice. The son learns magic, escapes from the magician, and returns home to his father in the shape of a horse. He tells his father that they will make some money, as long as he hangs on to his bridle. What follows are a series of shape-shifting episodes, in which the father sells the son in the shape of a horse several times. Each time, the father remembers to keep the bridle so that the son can return home. The father slips up, though, due to the magician's wiles, and sells the horse and bridle to the magician, who carries off the son as his captive.

The son manages to escape again, in some versions with the help of the magician's daughter, who becomes a love interest. What follows the escape is a shape-shifting battle. The apprentice and magician swiftly alter shapes until the son finally outwits the magician and defeats him. In some versions, the boy takes the form of a hen and pecks up the seed the magician has become, or he becomes a fox and bites off the head of the rooster-magician.

In the second, equally common version, the father is not a major character. The boy is sold to a magician and learns magic from him. Instead of the episodes with the magic bridle, there is an urgent need to have the boy escape before the magician can slay him, either because of the magician's jealousy or as a sacrifice. The shape-shifting battle takes place, but, in this version, the boy is helped by a princess. Sometimes, she is already known to the hero, and sometimes not. But she always gives the hero a place to hide. The shape-shifting battle ends with the hero killing the magician, and then the hero and the princess are married.

See also: Tale Types.

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Mahabharata

(Indian)

The *Mahabharata* is an ancient, sacred work of Hinduism and one of the two major epic poems of India. The other is the *Ramayana.* At eighteen books and about 100,000 stanzas, the *Mahabharata* also is the longest epic in world literature. This work, composed in Sanskrit in approximately the sixth century B.C.E., remains of great importance to Hindus throughout India and Southeast Asia.

In Hindu tradition, the *Mahabharata* is said to have been dictated to Ganesh, the god of

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wisdom, by a wise man, Vyasa. The actual origin is a collection of material that has existed in various forms for more than 2,000 years. The poems were handed down through oral tradition until about 300 B.C.E., when some were first written down. This process continued until the work was complete in about 300 C.E.

The name *Mahabharata* has two meanings. The first, "Great King Bharata," refers to a legendary Indian king. Second, since the word *Bharata* is also the official name for the Indian people, the epic is often referred to as the "Great Story of India."

The work contains legends, myths, and fairy tales, as well as the Hindu codes of law. The section of the *Mahabharata* that concerns religious concepts is known as the *Bhagavad Gita,* which sets out the basic tenets of Hinduism.

The Pandavas and Dhartarashtras

The main story, which makes up ten of the eighteen books, is an epic tale of war. This narrative is often interrupted by other stories and discussions of religion.

The *Mahabharata* tells the story of two sets of paternal first cousins: The five sons of the deceased King Pandu are called the five Pandavas, and the one hundred sons of blind King Dhritarashtra are called the Dhartarashtras. These two groups become bitter rivals and go to war over possession of the ancestral kingdom of Bharata.

The five Pandavas, Yudhishthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva, who were fathered by five gods, are helped throughout the story by deities and seers. The hundred Dhartarashtras are described as human incarnations of demons.

One of the most important figures in the *Mahabharata* is Krishna Vasudeva, who is an incarnation of the god Vishnu. Cousin to both sides, he acts as friend and adviser to the Pandavas, and as the brother-in-law, mentor, and charioteer to Arjuna Pandava, a hero of the story.

The *Mahabharata* is the great and lengthy religious epic of India. One of many battles is portrayed in this painting, which dates to the nineteenth century C.E. *(© Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY)*

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The War

The events leading to the war began with a game of dice. The Dhartarashtras took advantage of the eldest Pandava, Yudhishthira, and won the game. The five Pandavas and their common wife, Draupadi, who is an incarnation of the goddess Shri, were forced into the wilderness for a span of twelve years, plus a thirteenth year in disguise. When the thirteen years were over, Duryodhana, the leader of the Dhartarashtra party, refused to return the Pandavas' half of the kingdom, and war was declared.

The two sides and their armies met on Kuru's Field. The battle lasted eighteen days, and the Pandavas, after suffering significant losses, were victorious. Only the five brothers and their cousin Krishna survived.

In the years that followed the war, Dhritarashtra and his queen, Gandhari, as well as Kunti, mother of the Pandavas, lived in a forest retreat and died in a forest fire. Krishna Vasudeva and his clan slaughtered one another in a drunken brawl, and Krishna's soul faded back into Vishnu. Upon hearing this news, the Pandavas decided that it was time for them to leave this world.

Yudhishthira's Test

The Pandavas began the Great Journey, walking north toward the polar mountain and the heavenly worlds. All but Yudhishthira and a dog that followed him perished.

When Yudhishthira reached the gate of heaven, where the dog was not permitted to enter, Yudhishthira refused to drive the faithful dog away. The dog revealed itself as an incarnation of Dharma, the god who was Yudhishthira's actual father.

Now Yudhishthira faced one last test of his virtue. He found only the Dhartarashtras in heaven and was told that his brothers were in hell. Yudhishthira insisted on joining his brothers in hell, thus passing the final test, and was admitted into heaven.

As an important text of Hindu tradition, the *Mahabharata* should be treated with respect by storytellers.

See also: Epics; Garuda.

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Malory, Sir Thomas

(c. 1405–1471)

Sir Thomas Malory is the author of *Le Morte d'Arthur* (c. 1469), a work that condenses various sources on Arthurian themes into one prose text. It is the seminal medieval English Arthurian text.

Little is known of Malory's life. Born in Warwickshire, England, to middle-class parents, Malory was knighted in 1442. From 1451 on, much of Malory's life was spent in prison. He was incarcerated for crimes ranging from robbery to rape. Though these may have been the crimes of a truly troubled individual, it is also possible that Malory's incarcerations were more the result of the fluctuation in power during England's War of the Roses. He may have been imprisoned when it was politically dangerous for him to be active in society. Malory was released from prison shortly before his death in 1471.

Whether *Le Morte d'Arthur* was an original work or a compilation of previous Arthurian tales is a matter of some debate. For more than 400 years, *Le Morte d'Arthur* was known only by the edition that had been printed by William Caxton in 1485. In 1934, however, a manuscript was found by scholar William Oakeshott at Winchester College. This manuscript, known as the Winchester Manuscript, was edited by Eugène Vinaver and published in 1947. Because of certain internal evidence, Vinaver was convinced that *Le Morte d'Arthur* was actually a compilation of stories that should be viewed as separate entities.

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In any event, Malory did not simply translate and compile these stories. He took various and sometimes conflicting sources and decided what was to be used, and what was to be cut out, condensed, manipulated, or expanded upon. One portion of his work, *Tale of Gareth of Orkney,* may be an original story of Malory's. His creativity and originality were essential to the success of this work.

Le Morte d'Arthur is also important because it has provided the source material for many other creative works. From Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* (1856–1885) to modern films such as *Excalibur* (1981), modern Arthuriana is indebted to Sir Thomas Malory and *Le Morte d'Arthur.*

Judith Mara Kish

See also: King Arthur.

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Manticore

(Persian)

The word *manticore* means "man-eater." This was the name given to a weird and deadly monster in the legends of ancient Asia, Mesopotamia, and medieval Europe.

The hideous and terrible Manticore was said to have the body of a red-skinned lion, the face of a blue-eyed man, and the tail of a scorpion. Its voice was deceptively sweet, almost like music. But its jaws held three rows of fangs that could slash prey to pieces.

The Manticore could move frighteningly fast, and the monster could fire deadly darts from its scorpion tail. It lived in burrows deep in the earth and was said to be able to defeat all animals except the lion. Its favorite food, as its name implies, was human beings.

The earliest account of the Manticore comes from the fifth century B.C.E. In 77 C.E., Pliny the Elder, a Roman scholar, included the Manticore in his book of natural history. The Manticore also made several appearances in books written in the Middle Ages.

See also: Bestiary.

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Marie de France

Marie de France was a twelfth-century poet whose works range from fables to romances, including her famous Breton *lais,* which were short narrative poems focusing on courtly love.

Although not much is known about Marie de France's life, some information about her can be derived from her texts. At the beginning of her work known as *Ysopets* (*Fables*), she gives her name and her country, France, meaning Île de France or the area around Paris. Although she notes that she comes from the continent, it is clear in her writing that she is familiar with the people and languages of Britain as well. Remarkable in that she wrote at a time when few women were literate, she also wrote in the vernacular rather than in Latin, which was the predominant literary language of the time.

Many scholars believe that Marie's familiarity with Brittany in northwestern France and the Britons of England was facilitated by her connection to the court of England's Henry II, who reigned from 1154 to 1189 C.E. Her position in royal society would have given Marie access to society on both sides of the English Channel.

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Folklorists are particularly interested in Marie's source material. Marie noted that her lais were derived from tales of the Breton people. Although the stories came from this folk source, Marie likely manipulated the original folktales to fit the meter and style that she preferred. The mode of transmission was traditional as well. It is likely that the stories on which the lais are based were told to Marie in either English or Celtic. Perhaps because of this, the lais possess many qualities of oral texts, such as linguistic markers of verbal speech, and repetition.

Marie's collection of 103 fables includes loose translations of earlier written works—for example, the Ysopet fables, which are based on Aesop's fables. Of Marie's work, only her *Espurgatoire Seint Patrice* (*St. Patrick's Purgatory*) is a close translation of a written source, an anonymous French twelfth-century poem. Other fables had no previous written source.

Today, Marie de France remains important both as an early female writer and as a good storyteller, whose works are still accessible to modern readers and tellers.

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Maui

(Polynesian)

Maui is a major Polynesian demigod, culture hero, and trickster. He is known as Maaui-tikitiki by the Maori people of New Zealand.

Maui and the Sun

When he was born, Maui was abandoned by his mother, Hina. She was certain that he was going to die, so she wrapped him in her hair and cast him into the sea. But Maui survived the ordeal and returned to his mother, proving to her that he would grow up to be a great hero.

One of Maui's many important adventures was that of snaring the Sun. In the early days, it sped across the sky. Hina complained to her son that there was barely enough time for her to dry her clothing, and the people had no time to fish. Maui went to his blind grandmother for help. She lived on the slopes of what is now Mount Haleakala, or House of the Sun, where she cooked the bananas that the Sun ate every day.

Maui's grandmother advised Maui to weave sixteen strong ropes and nooses out of his sister's long hair. She said he should use these to lasso the Sun and persuade it to move more slowly across the sky.

Maui wove the ropes and hid. As each ray of the Sun reached Haleakala, Maui lassoed it until he had taken the Sun prisoner. Maui agreed to free the Sun if it promised to slow its pace. The Sun agreed, and from that day on, daylight lasted long enough for everybody to finish their work.

But the Sun still hung too low, so that people were unable to stand upright. A young woman asked Maui for help. He used his great strength to lift the sky and set the Sun in place.

Maui Creates Land

Maui also created new land. In the Hawaiian version of this tale, he descended into the land of the dead and received a hook made from the jawbone of an ancestor. This magical hook was called *manai ikalanai*. Maui then returned to the land of the living and caught a sacred bird, the *alae*.

Maui then told his brothers to paddle him out to sea. He lowered manai ikalanai, which was baited with the sacred bird, into the water. His sister, Hina of the Sea, helped him by placing the hook into the mouth of Old One Tooth, the great creature that held the land fast to the bottom of the sea.

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Maui then told his brothers to row. He warned them to not look back. As they strained, a great mass of land slowly rose behind them. Unfortunately, one brother was overcome by curiosity and turned to see what was going on. The great mass of land shattered and became the islands of Polynesia. The Hawaiian island called Maui bears the hero's name.

The version of this story told by the Maori is slightly different. Maui used the jawbone hook but with blood from his own nose as bait. He caught the porch of a house that was at the bottom of the ocean. He pulled up the whole north island of New Zealand, which the Maori call Te Ika-a-Maui, or the Fish of Maui.

Many other tales of Maui and his deeds—both as hero and as trickster—are told throughout Polynesia.

Anne Elizabeth Baldwin

See also: Culture Heroes; Tricksters.

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Melusine/Melusina

(European)

The medieval folktale of Melusine, alternately known as Melusina, is a form of mermaid story that makes use of the world folk motif of the taboo or the broken prohibition.

Versions of the story come from France, Luxembourg, and Germany. One of the earliest versions dates from about 1405 and is attributed to a French troubadour, Couldrette. Two versions of the story of Melusine are summarized here.

Melusina in France

King Elinas of Albania heard a woman singing by a forest fountain and found the beautiful fairy woman Pressina. They fell in love, and she made him promise that he would not visit her if she was in labor. But as she gave birth to triplet girls, Melusina, Melior, and Palatina, her husband was so overwhelmed with joy that he rushed into the chamber. He had broken his word, and Pressina and her three daughters disappeared.

When they were fifteen, Melusina and her sisters decided to take revenge on their father for breaking his word to their mother. They trapped him in a high mountain called Brandelois. When their mother learned what they had done, she punished Melusina as the instigator. Pressina condemned her to turn into a serpent from the waist down on every Saturday. The spell would be broken when Melusina met a man who would marry her and vow never to see her on a Saturday.

Melusina wandered to the forest of Colombiers in Poitou. There, young Raymond, who had accidentally killed his uncle, was wandering. At a fountain at the foot of a high rock, he found Melusina. They fell in love and were married. Raymond vowed never to see Melusina on a Saturday, and they were happy together for a while.

But Raymond's cousin roused the young groom to jealousy: What was his wife doing every Saturday? One Saturday, Raymond hid and watched Melusina turn into a monster, half woman and half snake. It was a secret that he could not keep to himself.

In grief, Melusina told Raymond that she must now flee and wander the earth as a specter until doomsday. She added that whenever she was seen over their castle, it would mean that the castle would soon have a new lord. With that, she vanished, and the grieving Raymond became a hermit until the day he died.

Melusine of Luxembourg

In the tale of Melusine in Luxembourg, Melusine was the wife of the founder of Luxem-

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bourg, Count Siegfried. When they married, Melusine requested that Siegfried leave her alone for one full day and night every month, and that he not try to find out what she was doing. Siegfried agreed.

But over the years, Siegfried's curiosity got the better of him. He spied on his wife and was shocked to see that she had become half woman, half fish. When Melusine realized that her husband had broken his vow, she dove out of the window into the Alzette River below and was never seen again.

Later Stories Based on Melusine

The German author Johann Wolfgang Goethe wrote *Die neue Melusine* (*The New Melusine*) in 1807 and published it as part of *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (*Wilhelm Meister's Years of Travel*; 1921; 1829). In 1833, the story was made into an opera libretto by Franz Grillparzer for Ludwig von Beethoven. This project failed, but in 1844, the German composer Felix Mendelssohn composed a concert overture titled *The Fair Melusina* (Opus 32).

There are two popular nineteenth-century fairy tales that may have been influenced by the story of Melusine. The first is Lamotte Fouque's 1811 work, "Undine," in which a young knight who has sworn eternal fidelity to the water sprite Undine breaks his vow and is slain by her. The second is Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid" (1837), in which the mermaid, when her lover proves false, spares him and becomes water vapor.

In *The Cathedral,* an 1898 novel by Joris-Karl Huysmans, one of the characters, Durtal, finds an image of "the *wyvern,* a sort of Melusina, half woman and half serpent, a very cruel beast."

There have been other mentions in various works. Perhaps the oddest modern vision of Melusine is the fork-tailed siren featured in the modern-day Starbucks logo.

See also: Tale Types.

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Menehune

(Hawaiian)

In Hawaiian folklore, the *menehune* are magical little people who first appeared in ancient legends. They are still often sighted today.

Traditional tales do not specify the menehune's size, but modern sightings describe them as anywhere from 6 inches (15 centimeters) to 3 feet (less than 1 meter) tall. Despite their size, the menehune are quite strong. Some stories describe them as unclothed, with long hair that keeps them warm and modest.

The menehune temperament is clever and mischievous, rather than malicious. In traditional menehune accounts, they usually speak to humans in the humans' language. However, among themselves, they often speak their own guttural language.

Most legends say the menehune live in the forested uplands or on a floating island. They are said to enjoy dancing and singing, as well as cliff diving. Mysterious splashes heard through the night are said to be caused by menehune enjoying a nighttime swim.

Menehune society is led by one chief or, in some accounts, by more than one. A menehune chief usually has a few special servants and underlings, as well as a large number of subjects. He also has magical powers and a tendency to turn disobedient subjects to stone.

Menehune are master craftsmen who are said to work cooperatively in large groups. They start work at sundown and work with amazing speed through the night, stopping promptly when morning arrives. Normally, anything still undone at dawn remains undone.

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It is almost unheard of for menehune to return to a task that they were unable to complete during the first night.

When the first Polynesian settlers arrived in Hawaii, they found dams, fish ponds, and even *heiau,* or temples, that showed no trace of human involvement. The settlers credited this work to the menehune. The ceremonial structures called *pihana heiau* on Maui, and the Menehune Ditch, an ancient irrigation canal, and Alekoko, the menehune fish pond, both on Kauai, are famous examples of supposed menehune work.

Many Hawaiians claim some menehune ancestry, which is the result of intermarriage between humans and menehune in the past. Only humans with menehune ancestors can call on the menehune for help with building projects. It is warned that if the menehune are distracted in the middle of a project by noise, such as barking dogs or shouting people, they will abandon the project. This is what supposedly happened to Alekoko, which was built about 1,600 years ago but was never completed.

The menehune usually ask for payment when they work for humans. The payment is traditionally a meal for all the menehune who worked on the task. This can include an amazingly large number of menehune.

Modern sightings of menehune generally report the little people offering a cheerful wave or greeting and nothing more.

Anne Elizabeth Baldwin

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Mermaids

The mermaid is a figure of primeval feminine power, and her appearance is nearly always idealized. She has a beautiful complexion and long flowing hair.

A mermaid is privy to secret knowledge, not only of the depths of the sea but sometimes of the future. Nevertheless, she has little understanding of human beings and is capricious and inconstant, much like the weather.

Origins

A search for the origin of the mermaid in myth and legend leads to a bewildering array of related figures. The enormous power of the mermaid over the elements and her habitual isolation suggest that the mermaid could go back to extremely archaic mother-goddess figures, such as the Sumerian Ninhursag, the Babylonian Tiamat, and the Greek Gaia.

Tiamat in particular resembles the mermaid. She gave birth to the world, which remained covered in water. When the god Marduk killed Tiamet, dry land was made from her body. Tiamat was a figure of primeval nature identified with the sea, and she was an enemy of the settled life of civilization—characteristics that this deity shared with the mermaid.

The earliest representations of merpeople that show creatures with a human torso and the tail of a fish come from Babylon. The Mesopotamian god of the sea, known variously as Ea, Enki, or Oanes, was represented this way, as was Atargatis, the Syrian goddess of love. The fish man is mentioned repeatedly in the Babylonian epic of creation, which probably dates from the early first millennium B.C.E.

The Greek author Herodotus wrote in the fifth century B.C.E. of the nameless daughter of the Dnieper river god, who had the torso of a woman and the tail of a serpent. The kings of Scythia, in what is now Ukraine, were believed to have descended from her children.

Hylas and the Naiad

It is difficult for us to imagine the fear and wonder that the sea aroused in ancient times. This dread of the depths is evident in Greek

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legends. *The Voyage of the Argo,* written by Apollonius of Rhodes in the third century B.C.E., features the story of Hylas and the naiad, or water nymph. The heroes of Greece embarked on the *Argo* to travel to distant shores in order to bring back the fabled Golden Fleece. Among them were Hercules, Orpheus, and other legendary figures, with Jason as their leader. When they disembarked briefly on a rich, fertile plain and prepared a banquet, Hercules wandered off to make a new oar.

Hylas, a young boy whom Hercules had adopted, went to search for water. A naiad emerged from the spring when Hylas approached. Seeing his face, radiant in the moonlight, she was overwhelmed by his beauty. As Hylas reached into the water with a pitcher, the naiad threw her arms around the boy and pulled him into the spring. One sailor heard Hylas's cry and summoned Hercules. But the hero was unable to find the young man and was overcome with grief. Hercules was so intent on finding Hylas that he forgot his other companions, and the *Argo* sailed without him.

After the destruction of Troy, the Greek princes Diomedes, Odysseus, Menelaus, and Agamemnon found the voyage home to be more hazardous than the war had ever been. Life at sea was precarious. Beyond simple luck, there was little defense against storms, and ships could run aground on rocks, coral reefs, or icebergs. Navigation often was a matter of intuition before the compass came into use in the late Middle Ages, and ships could easily be blown off course. Diseases that were contracted in foreign ports spread easily among those confined to a ship. The nearly endless number of nautical superstitions shows how vulnerable early seamen must have felt to the powers of the elements.

Superstitions

If a mermaid turned away from a ship, it was a sign of good fortune, but if she followed the ship, the crew would fear disaster. If a mermaid picked up fish and threw them away from the ship, it meant that none of the crew would be killed in a disaster. If she threw them toward the ship, at least some members of the crew were doomed.

Mermaids could be friendly and helpful, but their goodwill could not be taken for granted. Many stories tell of terrible revenge taken by mermaids on those who harmed or offended them. One such tale describes a drowning sailor who was rescued by a mermaid. All she asked in return was that he remember to visit her. When he neglected to do this, his entire village was washed away in a tidal wave.

One persistent belief is that if the spirits of the water were not able to take a drowning person, they would be angry. In William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1623), witnesses watched Ophelia drown, yet none attempted to save her. This may have been out of fear of retaliation by the water spirits.

Mariners usually thought of mermaids as spirits of water. Even the sight of a mermaid could inspire terror. Sailors would try to distract a mermaid by throwing coins or trinkets into the water in much the same way that ancient cultures would placate local deities by tossing sacrificial objects into a well.

An African American tale recorded in the early twentieth century tells of a captain throwing a crew member overboard when a mermaid demanded him. The sailor who was sacrificed was last seen by the crew wrapped in the yellow hair of the mermaid and drawn down into the depths. He married the mermaid and lived as her husband for six years before finding his way back to land. There are many such stories of sailors living on in the kingdom beneath the waves.

The Seven Mermaids

In "The Seven Mermaids," a tale recorded on the Frisian Islands, which lie to the north of the European continent, the sea proves to be a jealous mistress. A sailor, while disembarking from his ship, raised his hand to the sea and solemnly pledged his loyalty to it. If the waters

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treated him well, he promised, he would be faithful to them always and never take a home on land. Seven mermaids rose to the surface and heard his promise, then plunged once again beneath the waves.

The mariner prospered and became a wealthy man, but he longed for a settled life. Finally, he took a bride. On the night of his wedding, the seven mermaids rose from the deep near his home beside the sea. They sent huge waves that leapt over the dikes and pulled the man from the arms of his beloved.

The mermaids carried the sailor to their underwater home. He tried many times to return to his bride, but the mermaids always dragged him back to their home. The mariner represents all who dream of giving up the life at sea yet find themselves constantly drawn back to it.

Mermaid Community

There were occasional reports of mermen sightings, but those of mermaids were far more frequent. Occasionally mermaids were seen in groups, but usually they were alone. This is not to suggest that the mermaids did not belong to a society. People generally thought of mermaids as living in underwater palaces. There was an ancient and widespread belief that every creature on land has an equivalent in the sea. This is why so many marine creatures have names such as sea cow, seahorse, sea anemone, sea dog, and sea wolf. The merpeople were the equivalent of human beings.

In tales where the mermaid becomes fully human, marries, and lives with her husband on land, she is almost always a conventional wife. But in the kingdom of the sea, relations between the sexes are reversed. When they take a sailor beneath the sea to marry, the mermaids are more than sexually aggressive. Very often, they kidnap reluctant mariners, in much the way that the naiad captured Hylas. Furthermore, the mermaids continue to dominate the relationship, to a point where the poor sailor seems less a husband than a pet.

Modern Image

Myth, literature, and folk belief blended with the lore of mariners around the beginning of the sixteenth century to create the popular image of the mermaid. Representations of mermaids were carved on the bows of ships, etched in scrimshaw, tattooed on bodies, painted on the signs of taverns, and included in heraldic crests.

The sea was, together with the army, a bastion of unadulterated male companionship, a place where a young man might go to at least temporarily forswear the company of women after an unhappy love affair. Simply to have a woman on board was sometimes considered bad luck. Even traditionally female occupations such as cooking were undertaken by men at sea. However, both the ships and the waves were considered feminine. To embark on a voyage was, therefore, to enter the feminine world, to place oneself at the mercy of unknown powers.

The modern image of the mermaid further evolved with the expansion of trade in maritime culture at the end of the Middle Ages. Except for the virtually absolute exclusion of women, this culture was enormously cosmopolitan. Folklore from cultures throughout the world was blended on board ships. The mermaid took something from the Slavic *rusalki,* the German nixies, and many other water sprites of world folklore. Melusine, the serpent woman, whose story formed the basis of many literary tales of mermaids, was a product of early mythologies. Her story was absorbed into the folklore of Cyprus and reached Europe in the cultural exchanges that accompanied the crusades.

As explorers journeyed to the remotest parts of the globe, the sea was, as it remains, the final remnant of unspoiled nature. As people described almost all of the remaining land animals, they still had little notion of what might lurk under the sea. There were rumors of enormous monsters and legends of mysterious kingdoms.

For several centuries, mermaids were

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A mermaid figure carved on an eighteenth-century wooden bat from the upper Volga region of Russia. In pre-Christian times, the bird-siren and the mermaid were attributes of a fertility goddess; they later became symbols of joy and happiness. *(Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)*

sighted almost constantly, especially in the Atlantic Ocean. Christopher Columbus and his crew sighted one, as did captain John Smith. Rather typical of such sightings is the account by Samuel Purchas, a seaman who accompanied Henry Hudson on his second voyage to the New World.

Purchas recorded in his diary that on May 15, 1608, a sailor spotted a mermaid. She was close to the ship and looking earnestly at the men. The sailor called to his companions, but only one other arrived before the mermaid disappeared into the waves. Purchas reported the sailor's decription of the mermaid as a woman from the navel upward. Her breasts were exposed and her skin was very white. Her hair was long and black. Her tail, which turned upward as she descended into the deep, was speckled like that of a mackerel.

The mariners do not seem to have attached enormous importance to the sighting. It is casually included alongside reports of the weather. Purchas himself made no claim to having seen the mermaid. Though a fairly sophisticated observer, he gave the report without any hint of skepticism.

Most researchers believe that the majority of reported mermaid sightings were actually of manatees, which can appear very human when seen from a distance. The sightings also could have been of seals, which appear gracefully feminine. It has recently been argued that some sightings might have been of kayakers from Greenland or other places in the far north.

The play of light and shadow on the waves in different kinds of weather also may have created illusions. But the most obvious explanation for mermaid sightings is that they were hallucinations of sailors who had grown desperate for female companionship.

Literary Mermaids

Jean de La Fontaine wrote of mermaids in his seventeenth-century tale "The Shepherd and the Sea." In this story, a shepherd had lived for many years contentedly grazing his sheep beside the shore, until he was dazzled by the sight of merchants unloading their cargo from around the world. So the shepherd sold his flock and bought a ship. On its first voyage, the ship ran aground on a rock. Ruined financially, the shepherd was forced to work for others. Eventually, he managed to buy back some of his sheep. In the end, he called to the sisters of the sea and told them that they should tempt another, for he knew better than to trust them.

As people became less fearful of the ocean, the power of the mermaid also waned. She became less a living presence and more a decorative motif, sometimes a figure in tales for children. Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid" (1837) articulated a new conception of the mermaid, which has since found a place in countless films and books for children.

The Little Mermaid loved to rise from the sea to observe human beings. One day, she saved a prince from drowning and fell in love with him. Leaving him unconscious on the shore, she visited the Sea Witch and asked to be given a soul, so that she could live as a human being. The Sea Witch replied that the Little Mermaid could only obtain a soul by

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marrying a human being but told her that men found fish tails repulsive. The mermaid made a deal with the Sea Witch. The mermaid would give up her beautiful voice if the Sea Witch changed her tail into legs. The Sea Witch agreed.

The mermaid then entered the city of the prince. He failed to recognize her and married another woman instead. The mermaid went to the seashore in despair. The Sea Witch gave the mermaid a knife and ordered her to kill the prince. The mermaid was about to do so, but she instead threw the knife away. She fell into the water, which was no longer her element, and drowned. Then, instead of being annihilated, the mermaid was granted an immortal soul. After 300 years, she would ascend to heaven, a time that could be shortened by the good behavior of children.

"The Little Mermaid" describes the decline of the mermaid from a presence of great emotional power to a simple figure of entertainment. She is domesticated, brought into the human realm. The loss of her voice signaled the declining seductive power of the mermaid and, for that matter, the sea.

The voice, which sweetly called sailors to their doom, was a feature of the sirens, first mentioned in Homer's *Odyssey* in the eighth century B.C.E. By the Middle Ages, mermaids and sirens had become almost interchangeable. In many tales, mermaids lured sailors to impending doom with the beauty of their voices.

The loss of the Little Mermaid's voice accompanied that of her fish tail, the bestial element that made her distinct from human beings. In this story, she refused to harm the prince, and the mermaid was no longer a figure of fear.

Mermaids Today

Today, the mermaid appears constantly in advertising. Her image is used to sell beer, tuna, and coffee. Ariel, the Little Mermaid in Disney Studios' 1989 cartoon based on Andersen's tale, was featured in advertisements for fast food. Mermaids also are found on a vast assortment of merchandise, from lunch boxes and school notebooks to dolls. Mermaids adorn countless tourist brochures, pubs, restaurants, tourist shops, and aquariums.

Since Darwin formulated his theory of evolution, the boundary between human beings and animals has become ever more elusive. We now understand that we are at once human beings and animals, yet these two aspects of identity have not merged. The mermaid, half woman and half fish, is a fitting symbol for our divided selves.

Boria Sax

See also: Lorelei; Rusalka/Rusalki; Sirens.

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Meskhenet

(Egyptian)

Meskhenet is an Egyptian goddess of childbirth and of fate. She is the personification of the stool or bricks on which Egyptian women squatted during labor. Newborns also were placed on this stool when the umbilical cord was cut.

Meskhenet appears in certain texts as the mother of the king. She also accompanied Isis, Nephthys, Heket, and Khnum to attend the birth of three babies who would grow up to be kings of Egypt. Meskhenet's role in the delivery is not specified, but afterward she pronounced

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the destiny of each of the boys. Meskhenet is said to have performed this duty elsewhere. For example, she was present at the birth of Pharaoh Hatshepsut.

Artists depicted Meskhenet as a brick with the head of a woman, or as a goddess with a particular hieroglyphic sign on her head. This sign has been identified as the uterus and uterine horns of a cow.

Recently, it has been suggested that it is in fact the special knife, the *pesesh-kef,* used in the Opening of the Mouth ceremony, in which a mummy was given the power to receive offerings of food. It is thought that a pesesh-kef also was used to cut the umbilical cord.

Noreen Doyle

See also: Fates.

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Metamorphoses

(Greek and Roman)

Metamorphoses is a collection of ancient Greek and Roman myths and tales retold in poetic form by the great Roman poet Ovid in the early first century C.E.

Each story within the *Metamorphoses* features a transformation, or metamorphosis, of a character or a theme. Some of the transformations occur in order to save a protagonist from death or another tragic fate, such as the nymph Daphne's transformation into a laurel tree before Apollo seizes her. Other metamorphoses are punishments for wrongdoing.

The *Metamorphoses* is a valuable source of early myths. Ovid's telling of the story of Daedalus, his son Icarus, and their escape from Crete, for example, is the earliest written version of the tale.

Ovid made use of both Greek and Roman sources, adding his own personal touches. The myths and tales take place from the dawn of time to the age of the Emperor Augustus. While the overall theme of the work is the power of the gods, Ovid also pays homage to the glory of Rome.

See also: Ovid.

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Metaphors

Metaphors are figures of speech that compare two concepts that are unrelated, without using the words *like* or *as*. This device is widely used in the English language and can result in innovative or refreshing insights into a concept. For example, a storyteller might allude to fishermen as farmers of the sea.

Psychologists suggest that dream imagery is often metaphoric. For example, a dream of a storm at sea may represent unhappiness in the dreamer's personal life, and a dream about a still pond may be a metaphor for serenity.

In her book *The Implied Spider* (1998), Wendy Doniger used an Indian story as a metaphor to describe the transmission and alteration of folktales:

A philosopher met a village carpenter and asked how long he had used the same knife. "Always," the man replied. "It has been in my family for generations. We have changed the handle and changed the blade many times, but it is the same knife."

Ruth Stotter

Source

Doniger, Wendy. *The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology in Myth*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

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Mice

Folklore traditions about mice are widespread, and descriptions of these rodents range from dark creatures of death to witty tricksters. The word *mouse* comes from the Latin *mus,* meaning "thief."

In the ancient world, the mouse was sometimes linked with the underworld because of its burrowing habits. In the Old Testament, the mouse was seen as unclean. In Christian lore, it was considered a servant of the devil. A folk belief carries on today that the mouse came aboard Noah's Ark with the prime intention of chewing a hole through the bottom in order to sink the boat.

In ancient Greece, the mouse was associated with the god Apollo. This may be because mice were food for the god's snakes. The mouse was used by the Greek fable writer Aesop in his tale of the lion and the mouse. The strong, proud lion is caught in a snare, and the humble little mouse chews through the ropes to free him, showing the strength to be found in seemingly useless creatures.

In German folklore, there is a tale of a mouse running out of a servant girl's open mouth. When horrified people killed the mouse, the girl died, too. The mouse was her soul, running around outside her body.

In Bali, the mouse can be a shape-shifter. In one folktale, a slain mouse that is found to have a woman's face is discovered to have been the king's wife in mouse form.

In the United States, the mouse often has been pictured as neat and ladylike, such as the lady mouse in the folksong "The Frog and the Mouse." In an excerpt from one version, the mouse is a lady, and the frog is a finely dressed gentleman:

He rode till he came to the lady-mouse hall,
Kitty lone, kitty lone.
He rode till he came to the lady-mouse hall,
Kitty lone and I.
He rode till he came to the lady-mouse hall,
There he gave one knock and call.
Rock ma rarey kitty lone, kitty lone and I.
Lady mouse came stepping down . . .
In her silk and satin gown . . .

The mouse also is seen as a hero in many cartoons, winning in confrontations with a feckless cat over and over again. In this guise, the mouse represents a particularly American image of the little guy triumphing over those with power.

The animated hero Mighty Mouse, created in the 1940s, followed this model, as he conquered bad guys who were many times his size. Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse, introduced in 1928 in the first sound cartoon, is an innocent fellow with an equally innocent girlfriend, Minnie Mouse.

More recently, urban legends have cropped up about people finding a roasted mouse mixed in with fried chicken parts at a fast-food restaurant. Another modern addition to mouse lore is the computer mouse, so named because of its oval or round body and long "tail."

See also: Cat-and-Mouse Tales; Cats.

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Minnesang/Minnesingers

(German)

Minnesang was the body of popular songs that flourished in Germany from the twelfth century to the fourteenth century. People who wrote and performed Minnesang were known as Minnesingers. Like their contemporaries, the troubadours, the Minnesingers sang primarily of courtly love, but some of them created and performed epic poetry.

The names and works of several Minnesingers are still familiar to students of the period. Wolfram von Eschenbach (c. 1217; exact

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dates of birth and death unknown) was popular in his own lifetime. His epic, *Parzival,* which was based on the Arthurian tale of Perceval, is one of the best-known compositions of the time.

Most early Minnesingers were noblemen, but the rise of the middle class brought change to the musical form. By the start of fifteenth century, the Minnesinger tradition was finished. It was replaced by the Meistersingers, who were mostly of common birth.

While a fair number of the Minnesingers' songs have survived, the musical notation used at the time is different from current style, making accurate reproduction difficult. Two operas were inspired by Minnesang—Richard Wagner's *Tannhäuser* (1845) and *Guntram* (1894) by Richard Strauss.

See also: Griots/Griottes/Jelis; Jongleurs; Minstrels; Troubadours.

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Minotaur

(Greek)

The Minotaur is a monster from Greek mythology that is half bull and half man. The beast lived in the island nation of Crete and was created as a result of a failed vow made by Minos, king of Crete.

Minos had prayed to Poseidon, god of the sea, for a sign that would show his approval of Minos's right to rule: a snow-white bull. Minos swore to sacrifice the bull as an offering to the god.

Even as Minos finished his prayer, it was answered. The god Poseidon sent a magnificent white bull that climbed majestically up from the waves. But as soon as Minos saw the splendid beast, he thought it a shame and a waste to sacrifice it. Surely so mighty a bull should sire calves among the royal herd. So Minos kept the bull and sacrificed a lesser one in its place.

When Poseidon learned of Minos breaking his vow, the god took cruel revenge. He caused Minos's wife, Pasiphae, to fall in love with the bull. She ordered the famous inventor Daedalus to make a wooden cow for her. Pasiphae climbed into the decoy and fooled the white bull. The offspring of this unnatural coupling was the Minotaur.

The Minotaur had the head and tail of a bull, the body of a man, and the fury of man and bull combined. It caused such harm to Crete that Minos summoned Daedalus to build a great underground labyrinth, from which there could be no escape. The Minotaur was thrown into the labyrinth. But it still raged and hungered, and its fury shook the walls of Minos's palace. To appease the Minotaur, every year for nine years, seven youths and seven maidens were sent to Crete and sacrificed to the Minotaur.

Theseus, son of the king of Athens, went to Crete as a volunteer sacrifice, planning to end the Minotaur's cruelty. So handsome and brave was the hero that Minos's daughter, Ariadne, fell in love with him. She promised to show Theseus the way in and out of the labyrinth if he would promise, upon his return from the maze, to take her with him and marry her. Theseus agreed.

Ariadne gave Theseus a ball of twine, which he tied at the entrance to the labyrinth. As he made his way through the labyrinth, he unwound the twine. At last, Theseus found the Minotaur and slew it. Then he made his way back out of the labyrinth by following the twine.

When Theseus left Crete, he took Ariadne with him, but he abandoned her before they reached Athens.

See also: Theseus.

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Minstrels

The term *minstrel* refers to the professional entertainers of Europe in the Middle Ages. Minstrels were singer-musicians as well as storytellers, clowns, and jugglers.

The word *minstrel* may come from a medieval French word, *menestrier,* related to the English word *minister,* in the sense of "to minister to." This became *menestrel,* and from there it was an easy linguistic jump to *minstrel.*

Some minstrels had posts in royal or noble homes, while others wandered freely, entertaining people in castles and towns. Some minstrels created their own songs and stories, and some repeated the folktales and ballads they had learned from other performers.

In about 1350, the English minstrels formed a guild, creating various guild rules and charters. Among these was the banning of non-English minstrels or amateur performers.

Throughout the Renaissance, minstrels were granted or denied charters by various English kings. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, minstrels were declared rogues and vagabonds, but they survived nonetheless. The minstrel tradition lived on, eventually becoming the nineteenth-century American minstrel shows.

The most famous story about a minstrel is most likely untrue. When King Richard I of England was returning from the Crusades, he was taken prisoner in Vienna by Duke Leopold. The story tells of Blondel, a faithful squire to King Richard who went in search of the missing king. In the guise of a wandering minstrel, Blondel traveled over the land for countless days. As he went, he sang a song that was his king's own creation, but he got no reply.

Two minstrels provide musical entertainment at an outdoor feast in a seventeenth-century illustration printed in the *Album Amicorium* or *Book of Friendship* by Moyses Walen of Cologne, Germany. *(© British Library/HIP/Art Resource, NY)*

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At last, stopping near the castle walls of Duke Leopold, Blondel sang the king's song once more. This time, he heard a voice take up the refrain. He recognized the voice of Richard. The king told Blondel to let the English people know where he was being held prisoner, and the minstrel immediately set off on this mission. Soon after, King Richard was set free.

See also: Griots/Griottes/Jelis; Jongleurs; Minnesang/Minnesingers; Troubadours.

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Mistletoe

Mistletoe is a semiparasitic plant that grows on tree trunks and branches and sometimes kills its host tree. A great deal of lore has accumulated about it that has nothing to do with its scientific nature.

For centuries, mistletoe was thought to be sacred by the Celtic people, since it grew on the sacred oak tree. Five days after the winter solstice, which takes place around December 21 each year, druids would ritually cut the mistletoe with golden sickles. The cut plants would be caught on white cloth and not allowed to touch the ground.

Mistletoe also was used to welcome the New Year and to ward off evil. Mistletoe was hung over a baby's cradle to prevent theft by fairies, and it was believed that mistletoe promoted dreams that unlocked the secrets of immortality.

When hung in the home, mistletoe symbolized purity and strength and promoted happiness, romance, and peace. Custom called for enemies to meet beneath the mistletoe to throw down their weapons and embrace.

Mistletoe was believed to possess medicinal properties. When worn, mistletoe had the extraordinary power to ward off demons and witches while protecting the wearer from fits, fever, tremors, and poison. It also was thought to promote fertility. Mistletoe was used as a treatment for convulsions and nervous disorders, and it had some use as a vasodilator and sedative until the 1950s. Medical research showed that mistletoe had promise for treating some cancers, hypertension, vertigo, epilepsy, palsy, and cardiovascular ailments. Research also confirmed, however, that it is, in fact, poisonous, so alternatives were developed, and mistletoe—the miracle drug—disappeared.

Mistletoe's association with pagan ceremonies meant that it was banned from Christmas ceremonies by the Christian church during the Middle Ages; it is almost never seen even in modern churches. A common medieval belief held that mistletoe was the wood used to make the crucifix. Cursed, mistletoe was no longer welcome on Earth and was doomed to live as a parasite growing on trees.

It was not until the seventeenth century that people became more open about their fondness for mistletoe. Kissing under the mistletoe came about because of the belief that mistletoe's curative powers would cure a broken heart and soothe the differences between quarreling lovers. In France, the custom linked to mistletoe was reserved for New Year's Day: "*au gui l'an neuf*" (mistletoe for the New Year).

While mistletoe is no longer used to ward off baby thieves or to promote dreams of immortality, the romantic concept of kissing under the mistletoe has survived through the ages. Every year, mistletoe is collected and used as a Christmas ornament, and every year, children and family pets become ill from the poisonous berries.

See also: Motifs.

Sources

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Moon's Reflection

A common theme in folktales and fables from around the world is that of the Moon's reflection and the various mishaps that occur to foolish humans and animals who do not recognize the reflection for what it is.

In tale variants found across Europe and the Near East, a foolish man saw a cow "drink" the Moon's reflection. When the Moon was hidden behind a cloud and the man could not see it in the water, he was sure that the cow had eaten the Moon. In some of the variants, the unfortunate cow is then butchered by the fool in a vain search for the Moon so that he can throw it back into the sky where it belongs.

In another version known in the Near East, a fool saw the Moon's reflection and thought that the Moon had fallen into the water. He tried to lasso it in order to drag it to safety, but he fell into the water himself. In the midst of his floundering, he saw the Moon up in the sky and was sure that he had succeeded in freeing it.

Sometimes, it is the Moon itself that is not recognized for what it is. In a Slavic and Greek tale, a fool traveled to another town and greeted the Moon there as something he had never seen before, since it could not possibly be the same Moon that shone over his hometown.

In some tales, the Moon's reflection is not recognized as belonging to the Moon at all. A fool or foolish animal may have thought that the reflection was a cheese, and jumped into the water to seize it. This version is widespread, with variants in Europe and Africa, as well as in North America.

The Greek fabulist Aesop also used this idea. One of his fables tells of a dog that saw the bone he had in his jaws reflected in the water. Not realizing what he was seeing, the dog tried to get that bone, too. Instead of getting two bones, the dog got none.

See also: Fables.

Sources

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Morgan le Fay

In Arthurian lore, Morgan le Fay is a major female character who is often the enemy of King Arthur. She is also, in the standard tellings, Arthur's half-sister, the daughter of Arthur's mother, Igraine, and her first husband, Gorlois. She has two older sisters, Elaine and Morgause. Morgan is said to be unhappily married to King Urien of Gore and to have a son, Owain.

Her name, Morgan le Fay or Morgan the Fairy, implies an older tradition. She actually may have been a fairy in oral tradition, and she was definitely an enchantress.

Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini* (*Life of Merlin*; c. 1150) gives her first appearance in print. Geoffrey states that Morgan was the first of nine sisters who ruled Avalon, the Island of Apples or the Fortunate Isle and that she was a healer as well as a shape-changer. Geoffrey adds the element, also used by the twelfth-century French writer Chrétien de Troyes, that when Arthur was gravely wounded and taken to Avalon, it was Morgan who healed him.

Some researchers believe that Morgan originally was a beneficent figure, and she became darker and more sinister only in the thirteenth century. This change may have been the result of the influence of medieval Christianity, in which the idea of a benign enchantress could not be accepted. In various texts, Morgan brewed magic potions to overcome knights, tried to seduce Lancelot, and became the enemy of both Arthur and Guinevere.

Sir Thomas Malory's *Le morte d'Arthur* (1485) portrays Morgan as furious with Arthur for slaying one of her lovers. So she used all

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the means, magical and human, she could muster to destroy him. When she could not get her lover Accolon to kill Arthur with the powerful sword Excalibur, she had to settle for throwing its scabbard, which could ward off all wounds for its wielder, into a lake.

Modern Arthurian tradition, up until the second half of the twentieth century, darkened Morgan's role even more. She became the seducer of her half-brother, Arthur, and gave birth to the wicked Mordred, who eventually brought about the king's downfall. But in the earlier texts, it was Morgause, Morgan's older sister, who was the seducer and the mother of Mordred.

In the second half of the twentieth century, with the rise of the feminist movement, Morgan's character was reexamined and thought to be a Celtic goddess. In other modern usage, the eerie mirage that forms when a layer of warm air coats a layer of cold air is named fata morgana, after Morgan le Fay.

See also: Avalon; King Arthur.

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Mother Goddess/ Earth Mother

(European)

The primal figure of the mother goddess is found in many of the world's mythologies in various forms and guises. She is generally seen as the life force of Earth, often as the mother of all that lives. In many cases, the mother goddess is seen as the mother of the other deities of a particular pantheon and as the protector of mortal maternity—both human and animal.

The following examples of mother goddess figures reflect the diversity of her representation in mythology:

- In Greek mythology, Gaia, also spelled Gaea, is the living earth. Gaia gave birth to the sky and ocean and all living things—gods, monsters, animals, and plants. Today, Western scientists use the name Gaia to refer to the theory that Earth's many ecosystems act as one organism to control the environment.
- The Irish Celtic mother goddess is Danu, mother of the Irish deities and head of the Irish race of gods, Tuatha Dé Danann ("People of the goddess Danu").
- The Teutonic mother goddess is Erda, also spelled Urd, from which the word *earth* is derived. Like Gaia, Erda is said to have brought forth all living things.
- In Ancient Egyptian mythology, the goddess Isis, who may or may not have created life, is the protector of married love and maternal care.
- In Nigeria, Ala is the Ibo goddess of the earth. She is the mother of all things and the goddess of death.
- In pre-Islamic Arabia, the mother goddess was named Allat, which means simply "the goddess."
- In Hindu belief, Devi is the divine mother who takes on many names and forms, from Durgha the warrior to gentle Parvati.
- Sri is the Indonesian mother goddess, mother of the earth and the people of Java. As the goddess of rice, she is the Rice Mother and the Rice Bride.
- In Aztec mythology, Coatlicue, whose name means "she who wears the serpent skirt," is the earth mother and mother of the Aztec god of war,

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> Huitzilopochtli. Coatlicue's children conspired to kill her, as they feared her endless fecundity. But Huitzilopochtli killed his brothers and sisters who had plotted to slaughter his mother.

In these forms and countless others, the mother goddess is truly a ubiquitous cultural icon.

See also: Demeter and Persephone; Inanna/Ishtar; Isis; Tiamat; Wurusemu.

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Mother Goose

(European)

Mother Goose is the name of a nursery character familiar to children and adults throughout Europe and North America. She is represented either as an old woman with a crooked nose and large chin, usually telling stories to a group of children, or as a blatantly witchlike figure—an old woman with a tall hat and a magic wand, riding through the air on the back of a goose.

The earliest literary mention of a Mother Goose is in the French work *La Muse Historique,* published in 1650. Within it is a phrase, "Comme un conte de la Mere Oye," which means "Like a story from the Mother Goose." The fact that the phrase needed no explanation indicates that the idea of a Mother Goose storyteller likely predates this publication.

In 1697, French writer and courtier Charles Perrault published his famous collection of eight folktales, *Histories or Tales of Past Times, with Morals*. The book included his versions of familiar tales such as "Cinderella" and "Sleeping Beauty." What makes the work interesting in regard to Mother Goose is the frontispiece, which shows an engraving of an old woman sitting before a fireplace, telling stories to three children. On the wall is a sign that says, "Contes de ma mere l'oye," or "Stories of My Mother Goose."

When an English-language edition was published in 1729, a similar engraving was included. The sign on the wall now read, "Mother Goose's Tales." The work was reissued in 1768 as *Mother Goose's Tales*. In 1781, another collection of rhymes that included some songs from Shakespeare's plays was published under the title *Mother Goose's Melody*. By the time this book reached the United States in 1786, the name of Mother Goose had been

Mother Goose tells her stories to a group of children and the French author Charles Perrault. This illustration is from Perrault's collection of Mother Goose tales, *Histoires ou contes du temps passé, avec des moralités: Contes de ma Mère l'Oye (Histories or Tales of Past Times, with Morals: Tales of Mother Goose). (The Pierpont Morgan Library/Art Resource, NY)*

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firmly established. Since then, many collections of nursery rhymes have borne her name.

Most of the rhymes and verses in the various Mother Goose books were already well-known before they were formally published. Within the rhymes, scholars have found traces of folk songs, folk beliefs, street cries, and even political satire.

Whether there was ever a historic Mother Goose is open to debate. Some theories try to link her with Queen Bertha, the mother of the French ruler Charlemagne. Queen Bertha, who died in 783 C.E., was nicknamed Bertha Big-Foot, Queen Goose-Foot, or Goose-Footed Bertha. But there is no hard evidence to prove such a link.

There also was a theory that suggested that Mother Goose was a woman named Elizabeth Goose. She lived in colonial Boston and told her grandchildren rhymes from her own childhood. These rhymes were supposed to have been published in 1719 under the title *Songs for the Nursery, or Mother Goose's Melodies*. But no scholar has found a trace of such a book. This lack of evidence has not stopped visitors from stopping at what they believe to be Elizabeth Goose's grave. The grave is unmarked.

See also: Nursery Rhymes.

Sources

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Mothman

(North American)

Mothman is an example of modern regional folklore. The story originated in the late 1960s in West Virginia.

On November 12, 1966, near Clendenin, West Virginia, five men were in a cemetery digging a grave. The men glimpsed something that they claimed looked like a brown, winged human taking off and flying overhead.

This vision was followed by a second sighting on the night of November 15, when two young couples in a car swore they had seen a manlike, gray, winged figure with eerie red eyes. As they drove off at high speed, the creature took off and flew with them for a time before finally turning away. That same evening, another sighting was made, and a dog that was barking at the mysterious figure disappeared.

The media promptly dubbed the strange figure Mothman, which is the name of a villain from the *Batman* comic book series. The creature was described as anywhere from 5 to 7 feet (1.7 to 2.3 meters) tall, with batlike wings, red eyes, and brown or gray skin. He also was said to make a humming or screeching sound as he flew.

Sightings of Mothman continued throughout West Virginia until the end of 1967, when the sightings ceased. The Mothman phenomenon has been explained by some as various large owls that appeared larger and more manlike in the darkness.

The 2002 movie *The Mothman Prophecies,* based on a book of the same name, is a haunting version of Mothman's brief existence.

See also: Urban Legends.

Sources

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Motif Index

A motif index is an established classification system that categorizes and assigns numbers to specific details in stories. Storytellers use motif indexes in their research. The index provides story variants that address specific situations or characters, such as stories

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about snow or stories about cruel parents. These reference works also can help to differentiate culturally determined motifs from embellishments, such as the magical helper as the general motif and the fairy godmother as the embellishment.

The motif index most often used by storytellers and other individuals is the *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature,* established by American folklore scholar Stith Thompson. This index, which was based on the work of the Finnish folklorist Anti Aarne, was the first comprehensive organization of story motifs. It was originally published in 1928 and was revised in 1961.

Thompson's index is organized by broad categories that are assigned alphabetic letters (A = Mythological Motifs, B = Animals, and so on). These categories are further divided into subcategories that are assigned a numeric range (B0–B99 = Mythical Animals, B100–B199 = Magic Animals, and so on). Within these subcategories, individual motifs are assigned specific numbers, and derivative or related motifs are then given decimals within that whole-number classification (B81 = Mermaid; B81.2 = Mermaid marries man; B81.2.1 = Mermaid has son by human father).

This organization leads to a multilayered system of classification, which is flexible and immensely expandable for adding future motifs. Most other motif indexes follow the style of the *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* and use the following categories. (*Note:* The letters I, O, and Y were not included in the original index.)

A. Mythological Motifs
B. Animals
C. Tabus
D. Magic
E. The Dead
F. Marvels
G. Ogres
H. Tests
J. The Wise and the Foolish
K. Deception
L. Reversal of Fortune
M. Ordaining the Future
N. Chance and Fate
P. Society
Q. Rewards and Punishments
R. Captives and Fugitives
S. Unnatural Cruelty
T. Sex
U. The Nature of Life
V. Religion
W. Character Traits
X. Humor
Z. Miscellaneous

Following are some examples from Thompson's index:

> Action motif K911.5: Feigning deafness to lure enemy close and to kill him
>
> Object motif A791: Origin of rainbows
>
> Relationship motif E323.2: Dead mother returns to help persecuted daughter
>
> Character motif F311.1: Fairy godmother
>
> Concept motif H45: Hospitality rewarded
>
> Story structure motif Z11: Endless tales

For storytellers, two other helpful motif indexes are *The Storyteller's Sourcebook: A Subject, Title, and Motif Index to Folklore Collections for Children* (1982), by Margaret Read MacDonald, and *The Storyteller's Sourcebook: A Subject, Title, and Motif Index to Folklore Collections for Children, 1983–1999* (2001), which supplements the first edition, by MacDonald and Brian Sturm. Both of these storyteller's sourcebooks contain convenient subject indexes and also organize the stories by their geographical origin.

See also: Thompson, Stith.

Sources

Baugham, Ernest W. *Type and Motif Index of the Folktales of England and North America.* Indiana University Folklore Series. Vol. 20. The Hague: Mouton, 1966.

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MacDonald, Margaret Read. *The Storyteller's Sourcebook: A Subject, Title, and Motif Index to Folklore Collections for Children*. Detroit: Gale Research, 1982.
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Motifs

Motifs are dominant ideas or central themes in literature, music, or visual art. In literature, the term *motif* is applied to a recurring theme. Musicians use *motif* to describe a phrase that may recur throughout or characterize a piece. And artists refer to a *design motif*, a basic artistic image that appears in more than one work by a particular artist.

The story "Cinderella" contains several motifs, including the fairy godmother and the slipper, which are basic story parts that also appear in other stories. Folklorists have created sources that categorize story motifs and assign numbers to them.

The most widely used reference work of this type is the *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (1928), compiled by Stith Thompson. Those looking for story elements to combine or who are interested in the universality of stories, particularly of traditional narratives, would be inspired by this thorough classification system, which shows the common threads in stories that bind humanity together.

See also: Tale Types.

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Mystery Lights

Certain natural phenomena, such as the light energy produced by gas eruptions in swamps or mirages caused by a layer of warm air over a layer of cold air, are described by nonscientists as mystery lights. Folklore, however, has assigned special meanings to these eerie lights. When the lights are seen in graveyards, they are called corpse lights. They also are said to appear wherever a tragedy is to occur.

But some of the lights and images have been given personas by the folk process, and these can be used by storytellers. Following are stories of three of the most famous of these lights.

Will-o'-the-Wisp

A British creation, Will-o'-the-Wisp is said to be a creature, sometimes a former human, whose light leads travelers astray, generally into danger in the marshes.

One version of the folklore claims that there is more than one Will-o'-the-Wisp, and that they are malevolent spirits. Another version portrays Will-o'-the-Wisps as dead souls of people who were too bad for heaven and too good for hell. They are doomed to wander and lead travelers to harm.

Still another version claims that there is only one Will-o'-the-Wisp. A sinful man, he also was neither bad enough to be doomed nor good enough to be saved, and so he takes out his frustration by misleading travelers.

Jack-o'-Lantern

In Irish folklore, Jack, or Stingy Jack, was a mean fellow who played nasty tricks on everyone, even on the devil. Jack trapped the devil in a tree by placing crosses all around it. He let the devil go free only when he agreed never to take Jack's soul.

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When Jack died, his soul was not good enough to go to heaven, and hell refused to take him. So he wandered from that day on, with an ember of hellfire in a hollowed-out turnip for a lantern.

When this story traveled with Irish immigrants to the New World, the turnip became a pumpkin, the ancestor of the carved pumpkins seen in Halloween celebrations.

Fata Morgana

Fata morgana, another term for "mirage," is named for Morgan le Fay. She was the enchantress in Arthurian lore who was said to be skilled in the art of changing shape. In some traditions, she was King Arthur's sister and learned many of her skills from Merlin the magician.

A fata morgana does, indeed, sometimes look like a castle half in the air, half in the sea, and so the story grew that this was actually Morgan le Fay's castle. Sometimes, is it said that the enchantress made this castle appear to be reflected in the air, thus causing seamen who mistook it for a safe harbor to be lured to their deaths.

See also: Motifs.

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Mystery Stories

Mystery stories revolve around an unsolved fictional crime and the search for the perpetrator. The thrill for mystery readers lies in attempting to solve the crime before the fictional detective does.

The American short-story author Edgar Allan Poe was one of the first to explore the mystery genre, in works such as *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841). The crime novel's most significant development was the advent of formal detective characters in the late nineteenth century, such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes.

There are several types of mystery. The police procedural tries to get as close to real-life police work as is fictionally possible. This genre is often tough and gritty. Courtroom dramas also stay reasonably close to reality as the mystery is solved. Private-eye stories feature a private detective, usually one who is down on his or her luck or who carries some personal flaw. Spy stories were quite popular in the era of the Cold War from the 1940s to the 1980s.

Mysteries set in small towns, often in rural Britain, feature comfortable characters as detectives, such as retired librarians or authors. These stories are called cozies.

Historical mysteries are set in any time period prior to the current one. There also are specialized mysteries, such as sports or cooking mysteries, and mysteries in which pet cats or dogs are major characters. Some mysteries have been set in the future, aboard spaceships or in other worlds.

Mysteries can be set almost anywhere a crime could be committed and solved—from the proverbial locked room to an English manor or a college library.

See also: Fantasy; Horror; Romance; Science Fiction.

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Mythography

Mythography is the representation of mythical subjects in art or a critical compilation of myths. This definition was expanded in the mid-nineteenth century to mean the study of myth through anthropological, literary, and

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psychoanalytical approaches. It is an interesting subject for storytellers who use psychological elements in their tales, or for psychoanalysts using storytelling in patient therapies.

One of the most important figures in mythography was English scholar and folklorist Sir James Frazer (1854–1941). His best-known work is *The Golden Bough* (1890), a work of comparative anthropology, folklore, and religion. Frazer's "myth and ritual" approach viewed myths as explanations for rituals.

While this was a useful beginning, Frazer's studies did not go far enough into the connection between myth and ritual. A workable form of a myth-and-ritual theory suggests that rituals need myths to give the rituals a set of beliefs, and myths are more useful as sacred stories when they are circulated during rituals (oral narrations, dramatic presentations, and the like).

Mircea Eliade (1907–1986), a philosopher and expert on religions, used Jung's ideas of archetypes in his *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (1958) to discover parallels among the myths of different societies. Eliade also developed a theory of so-called sacred time and space. He stated that myths and contemporary society are connected because the reenactment of myth during religious rituals re-creates, in a sense, the primordial mythological events of a religion and establishes the guidelines for contemporary life.

Anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942) observed and recorded the role of myth in Melanesian society, where the origins of everyday customs and institutions were explained in myths. Malinowski, much like Eliade, concluded that myths are charters for contemporary behavior.

Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–) is a French anthropologist who worked on a cross-cultural comparison of myths in his *Introduction to a Science of Mythology* (four volumes, first published as *Mythologiques,* 1964–1971; English edition, 1969–1981). Lévi-Strauss showed how the stories of so-called primitive people were rich in complexity, and how alternative ways of life could be safely explored in narrative.

Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp (1895–1970) studied structuralism, or how the narrative elements of myth are arranged. He looked for elements he called functions, which are units of action—hero leaves home, hero finds magical object, and so on. Propp identified many functions in *Morphology of the Folktale* (1968). While not every function is present in every story, those that are featured hold certain consistent relationships to one another in a story. For instance, the hero might leave his home, encounter someone in need of help, and later be helped in turn. This sequence cannot change, although other functions might intervene; for example, before the hero is helped, he might be involved in another subplot.

Another development of mythography came out of the work of the Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). In his work *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), Freud states that humans share universal experiences and, therefore, also share the way they think. Further, he states that humans worldwide have many of the same kinds of dreams because of the shared human experience. Familiar patterns in myths are similar to Freud's "typical dreams."

Like Freud, the psychologist Carl Jung (1842–1896) considered dream symbols a form of shared human inheritance. According to Jung, myths incorporate repeated patterns that he called archetypes, basic symbols such as the wise old man or the great mother, which existed in what he called our collective unconscious, the shared human experience.

One of the newest approaches to analyzing myths is the feminist approach, in which the traditional roles prescribed for men and women in myth are investigated. For instance, in the Judeo-Christian *Genesis* myth, the creation of the woman Eve from the man Adam might be seen as justification for the establishment of a patriarchal political system and for prescribing a subservient role for women. Additionally, feminist approaches may reevaluate some myths in less sexist ways.

Wade Tarzia

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See also: Mythology.

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Mythology

Mythology is the body of sacred stories that serve to explain the belief system of a culture. These traditional stories, called myths, occur in all societies around the world. The word *mythology* also refers simply to the study of myths.

Myths describe each culture's beliefs about the acts of supernatural beings to create Earth and all aspects of nature, including celestial objects, geography, animal and plant life, and human life, growth, and death. Myths also explain the social aspects of a culture, including morals, roles, and customs. Thus, myths record shared beliefs that help communities maintain a common identity.

Myths serve many functions, from the general to the specific. General functions may lie in the psychological support they provide. Myths may answer such questions as "What is our purpose?" or "Why must we die?" More specific functions may include providing a model for ways of living that are acceptable to society.

Myths as Sacred History

The sacred history of a culture generally involves a past in which supernatural events occurred in an otherworld and events involving gods or supernatural beings shaped current reality. Mythic history provides justification for customs that are based on their origin in mythic times. In explanation of a tradition, elders of many cultures might simply say, "We do now as we have always done, since the beginning of time."

The sacred past is represented in myth and ritual. What the gods or other primordial beings enacted long ago is resurrected in the present. This may done be through the performance of ceremonies that can be quite elaborate or as simple as the Christmas story performed as a children's play. Such myths and rituals help maintain societal order by retelling the acts of the gods, reaffirming community ideals.

Myths narrated in public rituals during times of upheaval, such as famine, war, or the succession of a new leader, may have a calming effect. A crisis disorders society. The cosmic and social models preserved in myths may help to emphasize peace in time of war or serve to legitimize political succession, thus restoring a sense of social cohesion.

Myths and Social Values

Mythic characters exemplify the ideals of a society. They either create or reside in a world that resembles the mortal world and behave ideally in that world.

Some deities, such as Thor, the Norse god of thunder, are exemplary and true to their culture's social values. Thor is a completely trustworthy protector of the Norse cosmos. In the Norse myth of Thor's hammer, the gods lose the hammer and conspire to get it back by marrying off the goddess Freya to the Giants. Freya refuses, maintaining the sexual honor of her society.

But supernatural beings cannot always be placed into the categories of good and evil. Many myths are less straightforward and tell of

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imperfect acts by the gods, as in the double standards of Zeus or the machinations of Odin. A character also might make a mistake that leads to a penalty. For example, Aries and Aphrodite are caught in an adulterous union by the humiliating trap of Hephaestus and, while in his net, are mocked by all the other gods.

Mythological Themes and Motifs

Although the myths of different societies may vary in their details, and the types of myths that are important vary from culture to culture, certain themes transcend culture and appear in world mythology. The most general of these universal themes are time, origins, doomsday, and societal institutions.

Mythological events are set in the past, generally the remote past. Some myths from the Ancient Middle East, Hellenic Greece, and modern culture have in common the concept of a golden age, a time when humanity was believed to have lived under ideal conditions before degenerating.

The theme of origins covers the beginnings of the universe, the world, geographical regions or geological formations, animals and animal behaviors, and humans. The origins of fundamental processes of life and death also are treated in myths. Many societies have myths concerning the end of the world, whether in a great battle between good and evil or in a flood. Myths concerning the origins of societal institutions function as justification or charter for the institutions of the current society that uses the myths.

No examples of universal myth types can be found in every society around the world. However, many societies share certain kinds of myths or features of myths, such as themes or motifs, because of shared history or shared human experiences.

Myths of Creation

Myths of creation may concern the creation of the entire cosmos, the world, or specific features, as in the origin tales of topographical features or life forms.

Each Native American group has its own creation myth. In the Maidu version, creation began with total darkness and water everywhere. On the water floated a raft with three mythological people: Turtle, Father of the Secret Society, and Earth Initiate. Earth Initiate had power and knowledge but did nothing until Turtle began asking questions. Turtle wanted dry land and volunteered to swim to the bottom of the water. After a long time, he returned with a piece of dirt caught under his claw. Earth Initiate made this dirt grow from pebble size to arm-span size, and then as large as the world. Having dry land, Turtle then complained of the darkness, so Earth Initiate commanded his sister, the Sun, to rise in the east and travel across the sky. When it darkened again, Earth Initiate asked his brother to be the Moon.

In other myths, the world is created out of the body of a primordial giant or being. A Babylonian myth of the second millennium B.C.E. tells of Marduk, who slew the dragon Tiamat, and made the two halves of the world, heaven and Earth, from her body. In German, or Teutonic, mythology, the universe is created out of a giant called Ymir. The mountains were made from his bones, the oceans from his blood, and the clouds from his brains.

Some stories of creation concern specific features of the cosmos. The !Kung-san people of southern Africa explain the origin of the Moon this way: When the Moon, which is imagined as one of the First People, stood up, the Sun pierced it with a knife. The Moon left its backbone behind, which became the crescent Moon. The Moon then discovered that it became whole again after this death. This cyclical rebirth explains the phases of the Moon.

Origins of local features also are explained in myths. In the Kiriwina Islands near New Guinea, the lives of the inhabitants often involve ocean voyages in canoes. So myths of magical canoes explain certain landscape features. The hero Kudayuri's flying canoe pierced a beach and thereby created a strait. Another canoe was petrified and became a reef.

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Myths of Doomsday

The end of the world or the cosmos is a myth that is common to many cultures. Doomsday is often pictured as a final battle between good and evil: a catastrophe of earthquake, fire, and flood, or the resurrection of the dead and a final judgment.

The reasons for the coming of doomsday vary from culture to culture. Western culture tends toward concepts of human failings and divine judgment. Doomsday serves to cleanse mankind, as in the Judeo-Christian deluge myth. In the East, the world ends as a part of the natural cycles of endings and beginnings, as with the *manvantara* of Hindu religion.

In the Norse story of Ragnarok, the end is signaled by human treachery, as brother murdered brother for profit, spouses were unfaithful, and war broke out. The Jotun, a race of giants who were the ancient enemies of the Aesir, the gods, fought and died along with their enemies. The world was destroyed, but a new, fair, and green Earth arose. A handful of descendants of gods and humans remained and were given a chance of renewal.

Reflecting Society

The majority of myths involve the actions of supernatural characters who perform various roles from creator deities to culture-hero deities. The roles played by mythic characters generally relate to the society that originated the myth.

Complex societies with elite social classes that include kings, chiefs, and nobles have divine characters that reflect this social structure, such as the pantheon of the Greeks with their ruler, Zeus. Societies with a history of organized warfare may have myths about battles between different divine or heroic factions, such as the Aesir and Vanir of Norse myth or the factions of the Vedic gods of India. Some of these struggles involve monsters, and a hero protects the cosmos.

Simpler societies, such as those of hunter-gatherers, have no rigidly defined political ranks and little or no organized violence. So their myths are devoid of these motifs.

Mythic Protagonists

Certain categories of mythic protagonists stand out in world mythology. There is the protector deity, such as the Greek Prometheus, who taught humans many arts and gave them fire. There are culture-hero deities, such as Raven of the Pacific Northwest who brought sunlight to the world.

Many cultures also feature myths of dying and resurrected deities. These include Christ's sacrifice of himself for humanity and his resurrection, and Osiris's murder by his brother Set and his resurrection as an agricultural deity.

In a Trobriander myth of Oceania, the culture-hero protects the people against a human-eating ogre. This story explains the origin of the practice of cannibalism in that region.

Tricksters

Trickster figures are common throughout the world. They take many forms, both human and animal. They may be playful, foolish, mischievous, and sometimes harmful. Through their actions, the world is created or revealed. They may bring light to humanity, for example, but they also may bring death.

Tricksters enact the extremes of human behavior. By doing so, they discover the features of nature and our limits in both the natural and social world. The extreme behaviors depicted in folk narratives emphasize what acceptable behaviors are in society.

One well-known trickster is the Coyote of Native American myths. In one tale, he inadvertently brings death into the world. Coyote initially does not know what death means. He thinks it would be better for people to be able to grow old and die than to crowd the earth with eternal life. But when his son is bitten by the angered rattlesnake and dies, Coyote learns the meaning of death. This first death is the model for all others.

Mythology, Legends, and Folklore

Myths are sacred stories that are taken to be true, explain a culture's beliefs, and are set in

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a distant mythological past with gods and demigods as their main characters. Legends are set in the more recent past, possibly only a few years distant, feature local or historic characters, and may or may not be taken as true. Folktales generally are taken to be fiction and tend to feature generic types, such as orphans, princesses, witches, kings, and cowherds.

Legends diverge from myths in that they may use historical facts and mix in certain features of storytelling. While legends may include the supernatural—King Arthur sleeps in a cave and will emerge when Britain needs him, for example—or even gods, they generally are not primarily about the gods. Legends also might be stories that are politically or morally useful—as in the story of George Washington and the cherry tree. Young George was unable to tell a lie, a supportive belief about a nation's first leader.

Both myths and legends are sometimes confused with folktales, but there are concrete differences between them. Folktales differ from legends in that the settings are vague and conventional rather than local. The story may take place in a castle or on a mountain, but these places are not geographically defined. In contrast, myths and legends often are attached to real places, such as Mount Ararat in modern-day Turkey, where Noah is believed to have landed.

Supernatural elements appear in folktales as well as myths, but in folktales these elements function as contrasts to the heroes or as obstacles to be overcome. In a myth, a god may slay a dragon to create the world from its body, but a folktale hero slays a dragon to win the hand of a princess in marriage.

Mythology and Cynics

Myth is sometimes derided as simple falsehood or even just superstition, particularly when it is compared with science. Yet mythic thinking is not devoid of realistic thoughts. Humankind's comprehension of the workings of the world is woven into sacred stories. Although the methods of science and myth are not often similar, both can work toward the same goal. Both attempt to explain the world in order to comfort humankind and satisfy its yearning for knowledge.

People have various reactions to the myths of other cultures, ranging from skeptical to condescending or scandalized, depending on the degree of cultural bias the observer holds. Therefore, myths have been used by early explorers, colonizers, and missionaries as examples of the "primitiveness" of certain indigenous peoples. Today, anthropologists and folklorists delve into the myths of different cultures with respect for their importance.

Artists and writers have borrowed from myths when they found their ideas or imagery of interest. Historians have used myths as evidence of past events. In such cases, the myths may be "demythologized," a process by which a historian claims that the mythic elements were historic people and events altered by storytellers into mythic stature.

Wade Tarzia

See also: Motifs; Mythography; Tale Types.

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Nagas

(Hindu)

In Hindu mythology, the thousand *nagas* were said to be members of a semidivine serpentine race that lived in the city of Bhogavati in Patala, the watery underworld. Their ruler's name was Sesha.

The nagas took three shapes: serpents, humans with snake heads, and snakes with human heads. Because they could take human shape, some tales told of marriages between naga women and human men, though these references are not common.

The nagas are worshipped as bringers of fertility, especially in southern India. They brought rain. So in times of drought, humans asked for their aid. The nagas do have poisonous venom in their snake form, but they rarely use it. They are not evil beings and do not harm humans except in self-defense. If sufficiently angered, however, nagas will bring not just rain, but flood.

There are four classes of naga: heavenly, divine, earthly, and hidden. These classes correspond to their various functions: guarding the heavenly palace, giving rainfall, draining rivers, and guarding treasures.

A naga, a half-human half-serpent creature from Buddhist mythology, protects Buddha. This sacred bejeweled bronze figure, of Khmer design, dates to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century C.E. *(Erich Lessing/ Art Resource, NY)*

In Malay beliefs, nagas are represented as enormous, many-headed dragons. In Java and Thailand, a naga is a mythical serpent or

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dragon that sometimes has five heads. These nagas possess immense wealth.

See also: Snakes.

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Nanna-Suen/Sin

(Sumerian)

In Sumer, during the third millennium B.C.E., the moon god was known as Nanna-Suen. At times, he was referred to as either Nanna or Suen. In the Akkadian language, during the second and first millennium B.C.E., he was called Sin.

One of the god's most important cult shrines was located in the city of Ur, in present-day Iraq. In the cuneiform system of referring to gods by numbers, his name was written as the number thirty, which referred to the thirty days in a lunar month.

Nanna-Suen was one of the five offspring of Enlil, the chief Sumerian deity, and his wife, Ninlil. Nanna-Suen's birth is celebrated in the Sumerian myth *Enlil and Ninlil*. Another poetic composition, *Nanna-Suen's Journal to Nippur,* relates the story of the god's journey from his shrine at Ur to the city of Nippur to receive his father's blessing.

The myth begins with Nanna-Suen's decision to go to Nippur and his plan to build a barge. Nanna-Suen ordered other gods to procure the raw materials for his barge, and then he collected an assortment of animals as offerings. Nanna-Suen then set out on his journey.

The barge stopped at six towns before reaching its destination in Nippur. Nanna-Suen approached Enlil's temple and asked to be admitted. The door opened and Nanna-Suen was greeted warmly by his father. They shared a meal, and Nanna-Suen set off on his return trip to Ur.

This myth probably reflects an ancient rite that began in the third millennium B.C.E. In this myth, a statue of a god was transported from city to city on a barge for six days before arriving in the holy city of Nippur on the seventh day.

Ira Spar

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Neith/Neit/Nit/Net

(Egyptian)

Neith was an early Egyptian deity. Her insignia is found in art dating from the first dynasty (c. 3100 B.C.E.), and her name appears as an element in personal and royal names of the period. Although she had no regular spouse, Neith was sometimes paired with the ram god, Khnum.

Like many other Egyptian goddesses, Neith had a number of complex and seemingly unrelated aspects. She was associated with the annual inundation of the Nile and served as patron goddess of Lower Egypt. Like the Greek goddess Athena, Neith was simultaneously the goddess of weaving and the goddess of the violent arts of warfare and hunting. Neith also served as one of the four goddesses who guarded the throne and the internal organs of the deceased.

The earliest records show one of Neith's cult signs as two bows bound together. Another sign was an oval shape crossed by a pair of arrows, which has often been interpreted as a shield. Recent studies show, however, that pharaonic shields were never this shape and that these drawings actually depict a pair of

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click beetles. The click beetle is known for its ability to right itself when turned upside down and to jump ahead of rising floodwaters. This insect occasionally appears as a protective amulet.

Later, Neith was seen as the mother of both the crocodile god, Sobek, and the sun god, Re. The latter role meant that she was also mother of the world. In the first century of the common era, Neith was considered a mysterious and unknowable creator goddess. She was one-third female and two-thirds male and embodied all that is, has been, and will be. At this time, however, her cult center was largely confined to the city of Sais. Earlier, she had been an important goddess throughout Egypt.

When Horus and Seth vied for the throne of Horus's father, Osiris, the gods prevailed upon Neith for judgment. She sided with Horus but advocated for special compensation for Seth.

Noreen Doyle

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Nephthys/Nebthet

(Egyptian)

Nephthys means "mistress of the house." The Egyptian goddess Nephthys was part of the Ennead of Heliopolis (Nine Gods of Heliopolis).

She was also the daughter of the sky goddess, Nut, and the earth god, Geb, and sister to Osiris, Isis, and Seth. Also considered the wife of Seth, Nephthys was more frequently associated with the cults of Osiris and Isis. Like Isis, Nephthys was a mourning goddess who attended mummies on their funeral biers.

Nephthys appeared either as a woman, sometimes with wings, or as a bird of prey. She wore the hieroglyphic writing of her name, which is a basket atop the sign for *house,* on her head. She also appeared in temple reliefs and in certain tales at the birth of a king.

In texts dating from 2513 B.C.E., Nephthys was called the "substitute without a vagina." The only child credited to her was the jackal god, Anubis, whom she conceived with Osiris. Nephthys abandoned the baby out of fear of her husband, Seth.

Nephthys helped Isis bind together the dismembered Osiris, who had been slain by Seth. With Isis, Neith, and the scorpion goddess, Serket, Nephthys guarded the remains of the deceased.

Nephthys had no cult or temple of her own. In Greek myth, she became Aphrodite and Nike (Victory). Due to her association with the god of confusion, Seth, the Greeks also knew her as Teleute, goddess of death.

Noreen Doyle

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Nergal

(Sumerian and Babylonian)

The Babylonian god Nergal was identified with the netherworld and often called the husband of Ereshkigal, the queen of the underworld. In some texts, he was associated with fevers, plagues, and forest fires.

In the Babylonian myth *Nergal and Ereshkigal,* Nergal became king of the netherworld. The poem opens with a banquet celebration.

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Namtar, minister to Ereshkigal, arrived at the celestial court requesting that Ereshkigal be sent her share of the food. He was cordially greeted by all the gods, except for Nergal.

Outraged that her messenger had received such treatment, Ereshkigal threatened to kill Nergal. Nergal, in turn, decided to go to the netherworld. He was protected by seven deities provided to him by his father, Ea. Ea warned his son to turn down any offers of hospitality tendered upon his arrival in the netherworld, and not to become sexually aroused when he saw Ereshkigal disrobe for her bath.

Nergal descended into the netherworld, where he refused all offers of hospitality. But he could not resist Ereshkigal. The gods became lovers. Their lovemaking continued for six days. On the seventh day, Nergal asked to leave the netherworld, but Ereshkigal refused. He then tricked the gatekeeper, fled from the underworld, and ascended back to heaven.

Concerned that Ereshkigal would pursue Nergal, Ea disguised his son so that he appeared lame and deformed. When Ereshkigal discovered her lover had fled, she was crushed.

Ereshkigal sent Namtar back to heaven with a message in two parts. First, since Ereshkigal had never before had a lover, she wanted Nergal to be her husband. Second, now that she had been defiled, she was unable to render judgments for the great gods. She threatened to open up the gates of the netherworld and allow the dead to rise up and devour the living.

Nergal returned to the netherworld and embraced Ereshkigal, and the two made love for seven full days and nights. From that time forward, Nergal was king of the netherworld.

Ira Spar

See also: Death; Erra; Hel.

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Nightmares

In common usage, the word *nightmare* refers to disturbing dreams. The word derives from Scandinavian folklore, in which a *mara* was a type of evil or malicious female spirit.

The mara could enter a bedroom through any opening, including a keyhole, and seat herself on the chest of the sleeper. This spirit would ride the individual and cause foul dreams. The weight of the mara also could result in breathing difficulties or a feeling of suffocation. Modern science now calls this generally harmless but alarming sensation sleep paralysis.

In addition to her attacks on humans, the mara was believed to ride horses. The horses' owner would find them in the morning covered in sweat and with their manes tangled.

Twisted trees in Sweden, which tradition says the mara also rides, are known as *martallar,* or *marepines.*

The Mara in Iceland

The mara appears in the Icelandic sagas as well. In an excerpt from the *Ynglinga Saga,* written by Snorri Sturluson, the ill fortune of Vanlandi Svengidirsson is told.

Vanlandi promised to return to his Finnish wife, Driva, but he never did. The angry Driva asked a witch called Huld to draw Vanlandi back with sorcery. If she failed, Driva told Huld to kill him.

When the spell was cast, Vanlandi felt a strong urge to return to Finland, but his friends convinced him to stay. They told him that Finnish sorcery was being worked on him.

When Vanlandi decided not to go, he suddenly became terribly sleepy and cried that the mara was treading on him. His friends rushed to his head, but the mara broke his feet. They rushed to his feet, but the mara sat on his head and smothered him. And so Vanlandi died.

European Traditions

In Germany, an *alp* or a *trud* was a being that could squeeze through the tiniest cracks. One

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tradition claimed that sleeping with an iron hackle (a type of comb used in preparing flax) would keep the alp away. But there was a risk that an alp might turn the hackle so that the points pricked the sleeper.

Other traditions said that alps avoided shoes turned with the toes pointing toward a bed. If an alp was caught by a human, it could be made to promise never to bother that house again. Alps were capable of more than merely bringing bad dreams. One tale describes an alp making use of a herdsman's boat.

In Polish mythology, the bringer of nightmares is the *nocnitsa,* the night hag, who also goes by the name Krisky or Plaksy. A knife placed in a child's cradle or a circle drawn around the cradle with the knife is said to ward off the hag and nightmares. A similar hag in Bulgarian mythology is named Gorska Makua.

Other Beliefs

In Japanese mythology, evil dreams are believed to be the result of evil spirits. The supernatural creature that got rid of such evil spirits and changed evil dreams to good was called a *baku,* the eater of dreams.

The Bushmen of the Kalahari do not have a codified evil spirit of nightmares, but they do have a traditional way of removing the evil influence of bad dreams. Someone who has had a nightmare plunges a stone into the ashes of the fire upon awakening and tells the evil things in the dream to stay in the fire and not follow the dreamer. The latter is done to keep the evil from coming true.

Today, psychiatrists and psychologists make serious studies of nightmares. These dreams are seen as the mind's way of dealing with stress or past traumas. In popular culture, nightmares are still perceived as terrible things, even if many do not believe that nightmares are caused by evil spirits. In spite of this skepticism, dream catchers and other such charms for sweet sleep continue to be sold.

See also: Baku.

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Ninhursanga

(Sumerian)

Ninhursanga, whose name means "lady of the mountain," was a Sumerian mother goddess. Her temple, the E-mah, was located in the Mesopotamian city of Adab.

The Sumerian myth *Enki and Ninhursanga* is set in the legendary sacred land called Dilmun, prior to the coming of human civilization. The land is described as virginal and pristine, a place with no disease, death, or old age.

Enki, god of the underground freshwater ocean, mated with the mother goddess Ninhursanga and impregnated her. After nine days, the equivalent of nine months for humans, Ninhursanga gave birth to a daughter, Ninsar.

Enki spied on his daughter, embraced her, and then raped her. Ninsar gave birth to another goddess, Ninkura.

Upon seeing Ninkura, Enki impregnated her as well, producing the spider goddess, Uttu, a goddess of weaving. Ninhursanga warned Uttu to beware of Enki's advances, but Enki disguised himself as a gardener. Offering gifts of vegetables and fine fruits, Enki tricked Uttu into allowing him to enter her house. Then Enki seduced her.

When Enki impregnated Uttu, she cried out in pain to Ninhursanga, who removed Enki's semen. From Enki's seed, eight plants grew, which the voracious Enki devoured. Ninhursanga cursed Enki, saying that she would never again look upon him favorably.

At this point, the text becomes broken and difficult to understand. It appears that Enki became ill, and a fox appeared, saying that if Enki rewarded him he would bring about reconciliation with the goddess. Enki agreed, promising to make the fox renowned.

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Later, when Ninhursanga returned, she asked the sick Enki which parts of his body hurt. Enki named eight parts of his body. The goddess created a divinity from each part.

Enki then announced the destiny of his four offspring: One would become master of plants; another would become a goddess of brewing who would fill the hearts of humans with joy; another would be mistress of the month; and the last would become the master of the land of Dilmun. He finally declared that the two divinities not assigned management tasks, and whose names are not recorded, should marry.

Ira Spar

See also: Mother Goddess/Earth Mother.

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Ninurta/Ningirsu

(Sumerian and Babylonian)

Ninurta, also referred to as Ningirsu, is a Mesopotamian war god who protected the people of Sumer against their enemies in a number of myths. He is also said to be the god of rain, fertility, war, thunderstorms, wells, canals, floods, the plough, and the south wind.

Lugale

The Sumerian myth called *Lugale,* or *O King, Storm of Majestic Splendor,* opens with a description of Ninurta. The hero possesses superior strength and, as the god of thunderstorms, is a deluge, hurling himself at rebellious lands.

Ninurta was enjoying a festival in his honor when a disturbing message was brought to him. The Asag, who was described as the offspring of heaven and Earth, one who knew no fear, an all-powerful demon whose flesh could not be penetrated by either axe or spear, had been chosen by the plant-people as a rival king. The Asag planned to take over Ninurta's kingdom. The Asag's warriors, who were made of stone, were raiding the cities and terrifying the people, forcing them to make offerings to the Asag.

Ninurta's Rampage

Ninurta took immediate action. He cast an enormous hurricane before him, which devoured the enemy forces, smashed skulls, and filled crevasses in the ground with blood. But he did not find Asag.

Sharur, Ninurta's animated mace, warned Ninurta not to attack the enemy's main force, which lay waiting in the mountains. But Ninurta ignored Sharur and pressed on with his attack.

Suddenly, the Asag counterattacked with overwhelming power. Sharur the mace flew to Nippur to get help from Enlil, Ninurta's father. Enlil gave his son control of the Storm of Heaven and a mighty club. This time, Ninurta had the strength and weapons to attack and kill the Asag.

Ninurta and the Tigris

The victory completed, Ninurta turned to the state of the world. At that time, the Tigris River did not yield an annual flood of freshwater, which led to famine. Ninurta solved this problem by diverting the mountain waters that had been flowing back into the earth. He used the broken stones that were the remains of the Asag's rebel forces to make rock beds for streams and canals that would carry water to the Tigris and the fields. Ninurta's actions resulted in harvests of fruits and vegetables and fields cultivated with barley.

All of this work had kept Ninurta away from home for a long time. His mother, Ninmah, missed him and came to visit. Ninurta renamed her Ninhursag, Lady of the Moun-

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tain. He praised the fecundity of the mountains and decreed that their meadows would produce herbs for her, their slopes would produce honey and wine, and their hillsides would grow cedar, cypress, juniper, and boxwood trees. Ninurta also proclaimed that the mountains would be a source of rich perfumes, gold, silver, copper, and tin.

Ninurta then turned to the fate of the stone warriors. Those that refrained from assaulting the hero were rewarded, while those that opposed him were given severe fates. Diorite, for example, was used as the stone to be worked into holy statues. Duplicitous flint, which sided with Asag, also was condemned and was destined to be smashed into tiny pieces.

The Myth of Anzu

In *The Myth of Anzu,* Ninurta is again depicted as a hero who protects the gods and people of Sumer from the hostile forces that lurk in the mountains to the east of Mesopotamia. Ninurta was called upon to be the gods' champion. He was to rescue the tablet of destinies from the evil Anzu bird, who, by stealing the tablet, had endangered the stability of civilization.

Ninurta's heroic deeds against other monsters are also mentioned in this text. He is credited with slaying the Kuliana Dragon, Gypsum, the Strong Copper, the Six-Headed Wild Ram, Lord Samanana, the Bison Bull, the Palm-Tree King, and the seven-headed snake called *mushmahhu*. No complete myths are preserved of his exploits against these monsters, but representations of his fight with mushmahhu can be found in Sumerian art.

Ninurta and the Turtle

The beginning of the myth *Ninurta and the Turtle* has been lost. At the start of the narrative, Ninurta has recovered the tablet of destinies, the *me* (the power of the gods that allows civilization to exist), and the *gish-hur* (the gods' ideal plans for civilized life), which had been stolen by the evil Anzu bird. Ninurta was not content with the honors heaped upon him and set his sights on ruling the whole world.

To foil his plans, Enki, the god of wisdom, fashioned a turtle from clay. He placed the turtle at the entrance to the subterranean sweet waters, where it dug a pit and covered the opening. Enki lured the unsuspecting Ninurta to the trap, and Ninurta and the turtle both fell in. In a literal case of pride going before a fall, the hero was trapped, and the turtle clawed at Ninurta's feet.

Enki taunted Ninurta, asking, "Where has your strength fled? Where is your heroism? In the great mountains you caused destruction, but how will you get out now?"

The rest of the story is fragmentary. Presumably, a chastened Ninurta was finally rescued from the pit.

Ira Spar

See also: Culture Heroes.

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No-Bigger-than-a-Finger

(Russian)

While Tom Thumb may be the most familiar tiny human being in folklore, he is not the only one. No-Bigger-than-a-Finger is a tiny trickster hero and loyal family member who originated in Russian folklore.

Like Tom Thumb, No-Bigger-than-a-Finger had an unusual start in life. He was born

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magically when his mother accidentally cut off her pinky while preparing a pie. Her pain turned into joy when the finger instantly turned into a boy.

The child's small size did not mar his parents' joy, as they had been childless for many years. No-Bigger-than-a-Finger proved to be a good son, too. When he became aware of his parents' poverty, he determined to do something to correct the situation.

No-Bigger-than-a-Finger told his father that if anyone wanted to buy his services, it must be for a high price. The tiny boy then leapt up between the plow horse's ears and whispered commands.

A wealthy landowner saw the "wonder horse" plowing without anyone driving it. He asked if the horse was for sale. The wealthy man learned of No-Bigger-than-a-Finger, bought him for enough gold to keep the family happy forever, and put the tiny boy in his pocket.

No-Bigger-than-a-Finger easily escaped from the man's pocket but ended up in the middle of a forest. A wolf found the boy and swallowed him whole but soon regretted this living meal. Every time the wolf tried to catch prey, No-Bigger-than-a-Finger yelled out a warning.

No-Bigger-than-a-Finger and the wolf came to an agreement. The wolf took him home, and No-Bigger-than-a-Finger left the wolf alone. In some versions of the story, the wolf staggered off. In others, No-Bigger-than-a-Finger killed the wolf.

Safe at home, No-Bigger-than-a-Finger and his family lived happily ever after.

See also: Tom Thumb.

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Nonsense Rhymes

Nonsense rhymes are exactly what their name indicates: They are silly, nonsensical, and even surreal.

Nonsense rhymes are entertaining for adults as well as children. They are also useful to any storyteller who can manage to recite the rhymes without stumbling over the often tongue-twisting words—or starting to laugh. These rhymes provide a verbal release from the more sensible requirements of everyday life.

Nonsense rhymes are also excellent teaching tools, especially for very young children who are beginning to master language arts. The rhymes are easy to remember and fun to hear and say. Often, children enjoy inventing their own nonsense rhymes.

Nonsense rhymes were popular at the end of the nineteenth century, when long pseudo-recitations were made in which the words only seemed to make sense, as in this brief quote:

I come before you
To stand behind you
And tell you something
I know nothing about.

Another version of the pseudo-recitation was the nonsense created when a familiar story's words had some letters reversed. For example, "Cinderella's Slipper" became "Slinderella's Cipper." A complete recitation of such a reversed fairy tale is not for the faint of heart or weak of tongue.

Some nonsense rhymes are attributed to authors. This sample is by the nineteenth-century author Edward Lear, who was famous for such rhymes:

I eat my peas with honey,
I've done it all my life.
It makes the peas taste funny,
But it keeps them on the knife.

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Other nonsense rhymes that have no known author but are in the public domain also can be categorized as folklore. The following sample is familiar to many and, when analyzed, is a bit on the spooky side:

Yesterday upon the stair,
I met a man who wasn't there.
He wasn't there again today.
Oh, how I wish he'd go away.

Still other nonsense rhymes contain strange elements that may be hundreds of years old. The elements in the following rhyme seem to indicate hints of some long-forgotten ritual:

One fine day in the middle of the night,
Two dead boys got up to fight.
Back to back they faced each other,
Drew their swords and shot each other.

Because the love of nonsense continues to be part of the human psyche, a storyteller, whether telling to adults or children, may well want to add a nonsense rhyme to his or her repertoire.

See also: Cumulative Rhymes and Tales; Nursery Rhymes; Tongue Twisters.

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Noodle Tales/ Simpleton Tales

Stories featuring the simpleminded characters known as "noodles" or "simpletons" are found throughout the world. These humorous tales point out human foibles and weaknesses.

Earliest Record

The original sources for these tales are for the most part untraceable. The old Greek tales of this type were known long before they were written down. It is likely that early noodle stories had no other purpose than to amuse, with the exception of those found in Buddhist works.

The earliest tales and fables of noodles or simpletons to which an approximate date can be assigned are those found in the early Buddhist books, especially in the *játakas,* or birth stories. Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, is said to have related the stories to his disciples as incidents that had involved himself and others in former incarnations.

Many of the játakas tell of silly people and animals. The latter were humans reborn as beasts, birds, or reptiles. These tales had likely been shared for ages among the Hindus before Gautama's followers wrote them down in the first century B.C.E.

European Tradition

European noodle stories can often be traced to the original Buddhist and Indian tales. Composed of elements common to the Buddhist tales, they have been modified to reflect local manners and customs. For example, the Indian Brahman becomes a blundering silly son in European versions.

Regionally, the similarity between the Italian and Norse stories can be traced to the influence of the Norsemen on the culture of southern Europe. An example of a regional adaptation would be replacing Scottish oatmeal with polenta or pasta in a tale from Italy.

The Noodle

The typical noodle of popular tales follows his instructions literally, with a firm conviction that he is being very clever. The consequences of his actions are almost always ridiculous. These simpletons show the fallacy of the old saw that "fools learn by experience," for their next folly is sure to be greater than the last.

Generally, very honest and acting with the best intentions, the noodle is incapable of

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entertaining more than one idea at a time. He holds fast to a single idea and cannot be diverted from it until, by some accident, a fresh idea displaces it. So on he goes from one blunder to another.

The noodle's blunders, which would surely result in disaster for an ordinary man, sometimes lead him to unexpected good fortune. Men of intelligence toil painfully to acquire a mere livelihood, while the noodle stumbles upon great wealth in the midst of his wildest adventures.

See also: Fools.

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The Norse deities Odin, Thor, and Frey are portrayed on a twelfth-century Viking tapestry. Odin carries an axe, Thor holds his hammer, and Frey has an ear of corn. *(Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY)*

Norse Mythology

Norse mythology sets out the pre-Christian beliefs and legends of the people of Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Iceland. The myths were passed on exclusively through oral transmission through the Viking age.

The most detailed written record of this mythology was provided by the *Edda,* a medieval Icelandic literary work that lists and describes the traditional stories. *The Prose Edda,* written by Snorri Sturluson, dates to the early thirteenth century. *The Poetic Edda* was written half a century later by an anonymous author.

The Beginning and the End

At first, there was only emptiness, ice, and fire. The heat of the fire melted some of the ice into two primal figures, Ymir the giant and Audhumla the cow. As Audhumla fed Ymir with her milk, the first frost giants emerged from his body. Audhumla fed on the ice, and her licking formed the first of the Aesir, who were the main Norse deities.

The first god was called Buri. Buri had a son, Bor, and he, in turn, had Odin, Vili, and Ve, who slew Ymir and drowned all but two of the frost giants in a flood of blood. The three gods formed the earth and sky from Ymir's body and used the sparks from the fires to make the Sun, Moon, and stars. They made the first two humans, Ask (Ash) and Embla (Elm), from two logs.

The end of the world was called Ragnarok, or Gotterdammerung, which means "the doom of the gods." This, the final battle between good and evil, would lead to the destruction of the entire cosmos. This event would be followed by the creation of a new and better cosmos.

Norse Cosmology

There are nine realms of creation in Norse mythology. A tenth, the realm of the *dokk*

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alfar, the "dark elves," is sometimes included in the count.

1. Asgard: realm of the Aesir, the warlike supreme race of gods.
2. Vanaheim: realm of the Vanir, a secondary race of gods.
3. Alfheim: home of the *lios alfar,* the light elves.
4. Hel: realm of the dead.
5. Jotunheim: realm of the giants.
6. Midgard: realm of humanity.
7. Nidavellir: realm of the dwarves.
8. Niflheim: realm of ice.
9. Muspelheim: realm of fire; home of the fire giants.
10. Svartalfheim: realm of the dokk alfar, the dark elves.

These realms are united by the World Tree, Yggdrasil, which has roots that reach down through the lower realms and branches that reach up to the realms of the gods.

The Gods

The Aesir were the chief gods in Norse mythology. Their home was called Asgard. The Aesir aged like mortals but appeared eternally young and vigorous by eating the magic apples guarded by Freya, the goddess of beauty. The Aesir were to meet their end at Ragnarok.

Some of the more important Aesir deities are listed below:

- Odin: chief of the pantheon.
- Frigg: Odin's wife and patron of marriage.
- Thor: god of thunder.
- Sif: golden-haired wife of Thor.
- Idun: goddess of immortality.
- Balder: the white god.
- Heimdall: gatekeeper.
- Tyr: god of war.
- Loki: trickster god of fire; son of a giant and lightning; not truly one of the Aesir but usually included with them in the Norse sagas.

The Vanir were a minor race of gods. Among the Vanir were Frey, god of fertility; Freya, sister of Frey and goddess of beauty and fertility; and Njord or Niord, god of the sea and father of Frey and Freya.

The Vanir once battled the Aesir, possibly indicating the supplanting of an older faith by a newer one. They were finally admitted into Asgard, where the two groups of deities coexisted.

Elves, Giants, and Other Beings

The *alfar* were the magical elf folk, who were less than gods but more than mortals. They are said to be the children of the Vanir, possibly of Frey. The alfar are divided into two groups: lios alfar, or light elves, the fair inhabitants of Alfheim; and dokk alfar, the dark elves, the dark-hearted inhabitants of Svartalfheim.

The *jotun* were the races of giants—fire giants, frost giants, and mountain giants—that lived in Jotunheim. These master architects were said to be the enemies of the gods, although the two groups occasionally worked together.

Some of the important jotun are:

- Aegir: king of the sea.
- Fafnir: son of the dwarf king who was turned to a dragon because of his lust for gold.
- Gerd: wife of the god Frey.
- Gunlod: jotun who was either seduced by Odin or willingly gave him sips of the mead of poetry.
- Ivaldi or Vate: master smith who designed flying boats and other wonders for the Aesir.
- Skaoli: wife of the god Njord.
- Surtur: king of the fire giants.

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- Thrym: king of the frost giants.
- Ymir: founder of the frost giants and the first being created in the beginning.

Dwarves were small, hideous subterranean beings. They were a cunning race of master craftsmen capable of creating such wonders as caps of invisibility and magic rings. Individual dwarves generally were not singled out in the mythology.

A number of monsters are described in the myths. Fenrir, or Fenris Wolf, was a monstrous wolf sired by Loki who was bound by the god Tyr until the coming of Ragnarok. The mythology states that on that day Fenrir would break loose to slay Odin. The Midgard serpent was a great snake said to lie in the ocean, encircling the world with its tail in its mouth. On the day of Ragnarok, the Midgard serpent was prophesied to rise from the sea to be killed by Thor, who would, in turn, die from the serpent's venom.

The Valkyries were the warrior daughters of Odin. These sisters went to the battlefields after battle and chose the slain who were worthy of going to Valhalla, the great hall at Asgard.

A *volva* was a female prophet, priestess, or shaman. The volva practiced *seidr,* which could mean either "sorcery" or "shamanism," and were held in high regard. The chief god, Odin, consulted a volva to learn the destiny of the gods. The volva may have been actual historical figures in pre-Christian times.

See also: Heimdall/Heimdallr; Hel; Odin/Odhinn; Sleipnir.

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Nun

(Egyptian)

The name of the Egyptian divinity Nun means "weary," or "inert." He was not truly a god, but rather the personification of the original chaotic state of the universe at the time of creation.

The sun god, Re, and the primordial mound of the creator god, Atum, arose from the watery state of Nun. This earned Nun the title "father of the gods." Nun had a female counterpart, Naunet. Essentially formless, Nun was often shown as a man wearing a false beard, raising a solar symbol over his head that represented twenty-four hours.

Even after the universe was settled, Nun, a state of nonbeing, persisted at the edges of existence. He was the water above the sky and at its edges, from which the Sun emerged each dawn and through which the dead were reborn. People who were asleep were said to be "in Nun."

The Egyptians believed that at the end of time the universe would once again revert to Nun.

Noreen Doyle

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Nursery Rhymes

(European)

Nursery rhymes are rhythmic poems that amuse or soothe young children. These singsong rhymes are passed down by oral

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tradition. Some contain cultural information and values. Nursery rhymes are a vital form of folk literature.

The verses have a wide variety of origins that scholars have been debating since the nineteenth century. At the turn of the twentieth century, some folklorists theorized that "Jack and Jill" might have ancient Norse roots, although no definite proof was ever established.

Jack and Jill
Went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water.
Jack fell down
And broke his crown
And Jill came tumbling after.

Some nursery rhymes, especially those that contain what seem to be nonsense words, such as the British "Green Gravel," are believed to be fragments of ballads, prayers, proverbs, or tavern songs. In the case of "Green Gravel," the words may be a corruption of an unknown Gaelic phrase.

Green Gravel, Green Gravel,
Your grass is so green.
You're the fairest young lady
I ever have seen.

At the turn of the twentieth century, certain folklorists argued that some nursery rhymes may have come from ancient customs or rituals. Others, such as "Old King Cole" and "Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary," may be based on real people and events. The latter two may have been meant as political satires.

"Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary," for example, may refer to Mary, Queen of Scots. The rhyme makes fun of her elegant costumes with "silver bells," and the "pretty maids all in a row" refers to Mary's attendants.

Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary,
How does your garden grow?
With silver bells and cockle shells,
And pretty maids all in a row.

In the same way that folktales develop variants, many nursery rhymes developed a number of versions as they were passed from generation to generation. Most nursery rhymes as we know them probably originated after 1600, but some may have been created earlier.

One of the earliest English collections of nursery rhymes, *Mother Goose's Melody,* was published in 1781. But the term *nursery rhyme* did not appear in print until 1824, in a Scottish periodical called *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine.* James Halliwell, a British author, compiled the first large-scale collections of nursery rhymes in *The Nursery Rhymes of England* (1842) and *Popular Rhymes and Nursery Tales* (1849). In 1951, British scholars Iona and Peter Opie created *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes.*

The nursery rhymes that were intended for youngsters included alphabet rhymes, lullabies, and gaming verses. Today, the most popular types of nursery rhymes include counting-out rhymes, cumulative rhymes, lullabies, nonsense rhymes, rhyming riddles, singing-game rhymes, and tongue twisters.

See also: Cumulative Rhymes and Tales; Nonsense Rhymes.

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Nut

(Egyptian)

Nut was the Egyptian sky goddess. She was represented as a woman or cow whose nude body arched over that of her husband, the earth god, Geb, while her father, Shu, god of air, held her aloft.

It was believed that each evening Nut swallowed the Sun, which traveled through

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her body until it was reborn the next morning. She was, therefore, associated not only with the sky but also with the netherworld.

Like her spouse, Geb, Nut received the deceased who ascended to heaven. Coffins and sarcophagi often have the goddess painted on their interior. One of the major mother goddesses, Nut was considered the deliverer and protector of the dead.

In addition to delivering the Sun in its daily courses, Nut gave birth to Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephthys. In her aspect as the sky, whose inhabitants (the stars and Sun) disappeared and reappeared, Nut was also sometimes imagined as a sow that ate its own piglets.

In Greek mythology, Nut was the Titan mother of the gods, called Rhea.

Noreen Doyle

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Nymphs

(Greek)

In Greek mythology, nymphs were female nature spirits or minor deities associated with various natural objects. The nymphs were usually bound to these objects for life. For example, the life of a hamadryad, or wood nymph, began and ended with that of her tree.

Nymphs generally were represented as young, beautiful women. They were musical, amorous, and gentle, although some were associated with the wilder aspects of nature and were capable of destruction.

Land nymphs include the dryads and hamadryads of the trees and forests, the alseids of the groves, the auloniads of the pastures, the ieimakids of the meadows, the oreads of the mountains, and the napaeae of the mountain valleys. Other important nymphs were the naiads, or water nymphs of streams, rivers, and lakes; the nereids, the daughters of Nereus, who lived in the depths of the Mediterranean Sea; and the oceanids, the 3,000 ocean nymphs that were the daughters of Oceanus. The nymphs of the underworld were called lampades.

Thanks to the Greek-educated Roman poets, the Greek nymphs gradually came to include the native Italian nature spirits of streams and springs, such as Juturna and Fons, and water deities such as the lymphae.

Among the best-known nymphs are Calypso, Thetis, and Echo. Calypso was a sea nymph and the daughter of Atlas, the Titan who held up the world. Calypso lived alone with her maidservants on the mythical island of Ogygia in the Ionian Sea.

When the Greek hero Odysseus was on his way home from the Trojan War, he was shipwrecked on Ogygia; Calypso fell in love with him and kept him as her prisoner and lover for seven years. She promised him immortality and eternal youth if he would stay with her. But Odysseus broke her spell, refused to stay, and continued to Ithaca.

Thetis was a sea nymph, the daughter of the sea deity Nereus. Zeus, king of the Greek gods, learned of a prophecy that said if Thetis bore a son by a god, that son would overthrow Zeus. So Zeus and his brother Poseidon arranged for Thetis to marry a mortal man, King Peleus. Thetis refused. Peleus sought the advice of Chiron the wise centaur, who told him how to snare Thetis. Peleus found her asleep on the seashore and held fast to her. She swiftly changed shapes, but no matter what shape she took, Peleus held fast. So Thetis agreed to marry him.

The child of Thetis and Peleus was Achilles, the hero of the *Iliad*. Thetis tried to make her baby invulnerable to harm, either by burning him in magic fire or by dipping

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him in the River Styx, but in both versions of the story she failed to protect his heel. Achilles was fatally wounded in the heel during the Trojan War.

Echo was a vain nymph who was in love with her own reflection. She pined away for love of herself until only the echo of her voice remained.

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Oberon

(European)

In Western European folklore, as well as in William Shakespeare's comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (c. 1595–1596), Oberon is the king of either the fairy folk or the elves.

Oberon was first featured in literature at the beginning of the thirteenth century, in the French *chanson de geste* titled *Les prouesses et faitz du noble Huon de Bordeaux*. In this story, Oberon was described as a fairy dwarf, the child of the unlikely cross between Morgan le Fay of Arthurian legend and Julius Caesar.

Shakespeare seems to have been the one to codify the image of Oberon as king of the fairies. After Shakespeare's time, Ben Jonson used the character in his play *Oberon, or The Fairy Prince* (1611). English poet Robert Herrick wrote a poem titled "The Fairy Temple; or, Oberon's Chapel" (c. 1620–1635). In 1780, Oberon appeared again in Christoph Martin Wieland's romantic poetic epic *Oberon,* which Carl Maria von Weber used as the inspiration for his opera *Oberon* (1826).

Oberon still appears in fantasy art and fiction, though usually as the Shakespearian character quarreling with his wife, Titania. She may be derived from the Roman goddess Diana, who was sometimes called Titania. Shakespeare may have given his character that name in tribute to Elizabeth I, implying that she was divine as well as a mortal queen.

Both Oberon and Titania have been immortalized in astronomy as the names of two of the largest moons of the planet Uranus.

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Odin/Odhinn

(Norse)

Odin was the chief god of the Norse pantheon. He and his wife, Frigga, were Aesirs, the principal Norse deities. Odin was an ambivalent deity and was not easily understood or trusted.

Odin and his brothers, Ve and Vili, created the world. They slew the primal frost giant, Ymir, and made the world from the giant's body.

Odin was the god of wisdom, judgments, and poetry. He gained his wisdom by making himself a sacrifice and hanging on to the mythic World Tree for a mystic nine days and nine nights, all the while pierced by his own

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This Viking stone found in England on the Isle of Man depicts a scene from the Norse myth of Ragnarok. The god Odin, with one of his ravens on his shoulder, is about to be eaten by the monstrous wolf Fenrir. *(Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY)*

spear. At the end of the ordeal, he had learned the meaning of the runes. From then on, the World Tree was known as Yggdrasil, which means Ygg's horse. Ygg is another name for Odin.

These events did not end Odin's lust for wisdom. He willingly gave up an eye in exchange for a drink from the Well of Mimir, which gave him at least some of the wisdom he sought. From then on, Odin had only one eye. He appeared to mortals most often as an old, one-eyed man with a staff, wearing a wide-brimmed hat.

Still hungry for knowledge, Odin also was said to have studied the mysteries of the form of magic called *seid,* even though it was considered unmanly. And he worked as a farmhand for a summer to gain the mead of poetry, the drink that would give him the gift of magical verse.

Odin was also the god of war, bringing victory to his favorites and even instigating conflicts. Odin's warrior daughters, the Valkyries, chose the bravest of the slain and brought them to Valhalla, Odin's hall. The men were to stay there and prepare to fight on Odin's side at the coming of Ragnarok, which was the battle that would end the world.

Odin rode Sleipnir, an eight-legged horse that was the offspring of Loki, the trickster. He had two ravens, Huginn (Thought) and Muninn (Memory), which gathered information for him, and two wolves, Geri and Freki. From his throne, Hlidskjalf, in Valhalla, Odin could watch everything that occurred in the universe.

See also: An/Anu; Frigga/Frigg; Norse Mythology; Sius; Wele; Zeus.

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Odysseus

(Greek)

The Greek hero Odysseus was the ruler of the island kingdom of Ithaca and the protagonist of Homer's epic the *Odyssey.* Odysseus, called Ulysses by the Romans, was known for his cleverness and cunning. He was one of the most prominent Greek leaders in the Trojan War.

Odysseus had been one of the original suitors of Helen of Troy. But when Menelaus, king of Sparta, won her, Odysseus married Penelope instead and settled down happily with his wife and their new son, Telemachus. When Helen was stolen away by Prince Paris

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of Troy, Menelaus rallied all of Helen's former suitors and their armies to help him in his war against Troy.

Only Odysseus had no intention of leaving his home and family for a war that he considered none of his affair. When Menelaus's men came for him, he pretended to be insane, plowing a field and sowing salt instead of grain. But one of the men, Palamedes, put Odysseus's baby in the direct path of the plow, and Odysseus was forced to drop his act.

In spite of Odysseus's initial reluctance, he fought heroically in the Trojan War. After years of stalemate, it was Odysseus, presumably fed up with being stuck outside the walls of Troy, who came up with the idea of the Trojan horse, the trick that let the Greeks finally take the city.

Odyssey

The Trojan War was finally over, and Odysseus set out for home. But the trip, as chronicled in the *Odyssey,* took him ten long years. Part of the problem was the anger of Poseidon, god of the sea, who disliked Odysseus because Athena, Poseidon's rival, favored the man. A series of fantastic dangers awaited Odysseus and his crew.

At their first stop, Odysseus rescued his men from the blissful but deadly drug dreams of the Lotus-Eaters. Later, when he and his crew stopped to catch fresh game, the giant, one-eyed man-eater called Cyclops cornered them. Odysseus tricked and blinded the Cyclops so that his crew could escape. Then, while on the island of the beautiful sorceress Circe, the crew was turned into pigs. Odysseus charmed Circe into reversing her spell with the help of an enchanted herb.

The weary Odysseus sought help and braved the terrors of the underworld. Hades, god of the dead, allowed Odysseus's mother and others to go to the hero's aid. They told him how to get past some of the upcoming dangers, and warned him not to touch the cattle of the Sun, which were sacred.

Odysseus got his men past the Sirens, whose beautiful songs lured men to their deaths,

The Greek hero-king Odysseus wanted to hear the songs of the Sirens, who used their beautiful voices to lure men to their deaths. Odysseus had his men bind him to their ship's mast and plug their own ears with wax. Odysseus could hear the Sirens but remained safe from them. This scene is depicted on a red-figured Greek jar of the fifth century B.C.E. *(© British Museum/Art Resource, NY)*

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by putting wax in their ears. Only Odysseus heard the songs, but he was tied to a mast so that he could not go to them.

Odysseus then steered the ship through the narrow strait that was inhabited by the monsters Scylla and Charybdis. Scylla was a creature that devoured whatever came within reach, which included several of Odysseus's companions. Charybdis drank the waters and regurgitated them three times each day. She was probably a representation of a treacherous whirlpool.

After surviving all of these dangers, the men put ashore and, despite Odysseus's warning, slew and ate the cattle of the Sun. Their ship became the target of Poseidon's anger and was struck by a thunderbolt. Only Odysseus survived.

Further Trials

Odysseus landed on the island of the nymph Calypso. She made him her lover and would not allow him to leave for seven years. Zeus finally intervened, allowing Odysseus to sail away on a small boat.

But Poseidon was not yet finished with Odysseus. Another storm struck, sinking Odysseus's ship. He came ashore on the island of the Phaeacians, where he was magnificently entertained. Then, at long last, he returned to Ithaca.

Return to Ithaca

Odysseus's troubles followed him home. During his long absence, his wife, Penelope, had remained faithful to him, but everyone was certain he was dead, so she was under enormous pressure to remarry. A host of suitors occupied her palace, drinking and eating and behaving insolently to Penelope and Telemachus.

Odysseus arrived at the palace just as Penelope was becoming desperate. Disguised as a ragged beggar, he observed the suitors' rough, rude behavior and his wife's fidelity. He took up his bow, revealed his identity, and, with the help of Telemachus, slaughtered the suitors and cleansed the palace.

The bow used by Odysseus in this incident could be drawn by no one but the hero. This device of only the hero being able to wield a particular weapon is a world motif. It is found in the Indian story of the *Ramayana,* in which Rama pulls the bow no one else can draw to win Sita. In other tales, the bow is switched to a sword. In German lore and in the tales of King Arthur, for example, only the rightful king can draw the sword.

See also: Homer; *Iliad; Odyssey;* Penelope.

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Odyssey

(Greek)

The *Odyssey* was probably created by the Greek poet Homer in the eighth or ninth century B.C.E. The epic follows the adventures of the hero Odysseus in his quest to return home to Ithaca after the Trojan War, and the story of the family that he left behind for twenty years.

The first part of the *Odyssey* takes place in Ithaca, where suitors besieged Odysseus's wife, Penelope. Odysseus's long absence had led many people back home to believe he was dead. They pressured Penelope to remarry. She had managed to put off a second marriage for many years, but the suitors, who did nothing but sit around and eat quantities of food, were becoming restless. They insisted that Penelope make a decision very soon. Athena appeared to Telemachus, the son of Odysseus and Penelope, and assisted him in discovering his father's fate.

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Odysseus was alive, but after a quarrel with Poseidon, he and his men were thrown off course. What followed were many wild adventures, such as a narrow escape from the Cyclops, a one-eyed giant that clever Odysseus blinded then tricked into claiming that "nobody"—the name Odysseus had said was his own—had harmed him.

Then there was the unintentional visit to the island of Circe, a man-hating, powerful sorceress who turned all Odysseus's men to swine. Odysseus escaped with the help of a magic herb, moly (garlic), and forced Circe to restore his men to their rightful shapes.

Then came the narrow strait between the monstrous Scylla and Charybdis. Odysseus's ship and men survived this pass, only to be the victims of a later shipwreck. Odysseus was the only survivor.

Thereafter, he was trapped for seven years on an island by the nymph Calypso. Athena convinced Zeus to order Calypso to release Odysseus who built a raft and sailed away.

But Poseidon had not forgotten his anger at Odysseus. The god called up a terrible storm that stranded Odysseus yet again. The hero was found on the shore by Nausicaa, a princess of the Phaeacians. The inhabitants of Phaeacia were peaceful, reasonable people who promised to help Odysseus. The hero tearfully related everything that had happened to him since the end of the Trojan War. The Phaeacians took pity on him and returned him to Ithaca.

By this time, it had been ten years since the end of the war and twenty since Odysseus had left home. He dressed as a beggar to be able to assess the situation without being noticed. He was reunited with his son, and together they formulated a plan to kill Penelope's suitors and regain control of his lands. Through guile and a demonstration of strength, Odysseus managed to overcome the suitors and was reunited with his wife, his son, and his father, Laertes.

The character of Odysseus encompasses much of what the ancient Greeks admired in a man: athletic accomplishment, wiliness, intelligence, courage, and wisdom. However, the name *Odysseus* means either someone who is cursed or someone who brings curses upon others. It is a fitting name for an adventurer who angered Poseidon by refusing to worship him and who did not manage to bring even one of his sailors home with him.

The poem is divided into twenty-four books, but these divisions are not original to the piece. It is thought that a later transcriber divided the work into twenty-four sections, one for each letter in the Greek alphabet.

See also: Homer; *Iliad;* Odysseus.

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Oedipus

(Greek)

The theme of the Greek tragedy of Oedipus is the inevitability of fate. Perhaps its stark tragedy and cathartic ending have led to its continued popularity, as well as its usefulness to storytellers.

Laius, king of Thebes, was warned by an oracle that there was danger to his throne and to his life if his newborn son was allowed to grow up. Laius gave the child to a herdsman and ordered that he destroy the boy.

The herdsman was moved to pity, yet he did not dare disobey, so he tied up the child's feet and left him hanging from the branch of a tree on Mount Cithaeron. Some versions of the tale say that Laius pierced his son's ankles through with a pin.

The baby was found by another herdsman who lived under the rule of Polybus, king of Corinth. Polybus and his wife, Merope, had no children of their own, and so they adopted

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the child, whom they named Oedipus, or Swollen Foot. Oedipus grew up in Corinth, knowing nothing of his true origin.

The Oracle at Delphi

While Oedipus was at Delphi, the oracle there told him that he would kill his father and marry his own mother. Fighting against fate, Oedipus resolved to leave Corinth and his parents, for he thought that the oracle meant Polybus and Merope.

Soon after Oedipus left his home in Corinth, Laius was traveling back to Delphi, accompanied by a single attendant. They met another charioteer on a narrow road, a young man who refused to get out of the way at their command.

This conflict led to a fight in which Laius was slain. The young man in the chariot was Oedipus, who had unknowingly slain his own father.

The Sphinx

A strange monster called the Sphinx came to haunt the road to Thebes. The Sphinx had a woman's head and upper body and the hindquarters of a lion. She lay crouched in wait high up on a rock and stopped all who tried to pass. The Sphinx asked each traveler a riddle, and only one who could solve it would be allowed to pass safely. No one had passed the test before Oedipus arrived.

The tragic Greek hero Oedipus encounters the Greek sphinx in an illustration from a red-figured drinking cup of the fifth century B.C.E. The sphinx asked Oedipus a riddle. When he answered it correctly, she threw herself off a cliff in despair. *(Scala/Art Resource, NY)*

The Sphinx asked, "What animal is that which in the morning goes on four feet, at noon on two, and in the evening upon three?" Oedipus answered, "Man, who in childhood creeps on hands and knees, in manhood walks erect, and in old age with the aid of a staff." The Sphinx was so mortified someone had solved her riddle that she cast herself down from the rock and perished.

Oedipus Learns the Truth

The Theban people were so grateful to Oedipus that they made him their king and married him to their queen, Jocasta. For years, the couple had no idea that anything was wrong.

Then Thebes was struck with a plague that left its fields and women barren. Oedipus sent his brother-in-law Creon to ask the oracle at Delphi how to put an end to the plague. Creon was told that once the killer of King Laius was found, Thebes would be saved.

Oedipus had no idea he was the killer, but he did his best to learn the truth. At last, he asked the blind seer Teiresias for help. But Teiresias warned Oedipus not to ask. At last, when threatened by Oedipus, Teiresias reluctantly told him the truth: Oedipus had killed his father and married his mother.

Jocasta, horror-struck, hanged herself. Oedipus, maddened, blinded himself. He then wandered off, accompanied by his daughters Antigone and Ismene, until at last his misery ended in death.

The story of Oedipus was known to psychologist Sigmund Freud, who used the phrase "Oedipus complex" to describe a man who had a secret—or unknown—desire for his mother. Today, the incest taboo is as ingrained as ever in most cultures, and the sad myth of Oedipus can still create at least a touch of horror.

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See also: Sphinx.

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Operas and Their Stories

Nowhere is the convergence of the various arts, including storytelling, more of a complete synthesis than in the realm of opera.

The association of music with drama dates to the mythic productions of the Greek theater. The plays of Euripides and Sophocles in the fifth century B.C.E. utilized choruses that sang rather than recited. These choruses were meant to instruct and enlighten the audience. The philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle railed against these public displays of extreme emotions, which they viewed as potentially disruptive to the people's psyche, especially to impressionable young men.

The Birth of the Musical Theater and Madrigals

Throughout the Middle Ages, theatrical productions on religious themes, with music included, were performed across Europe by various wandering troupes. The secular music of the thirteenth century included works that were the foundation of what we know as musical theater, with performances such as Adam de la Halle's *Robin and Marian.*

During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, popular songs called madrigals were grouped together in performance. Different combinations of voices were used to represent different "characters," acting out their thoughts and feelings of love and woe.

Beginnings of Modern Opera

Opera as we know it began during the latter half of the seventeenth century in Italy and quickly spread throughout the courts of Europe. These works included the basic elements of arias, solo songs with instrumental accompaniment; recitatives, a style of song that imitates the rhythm of spoken language; and vocal ensembles.

The subject matter of these early works reflected the Greco-Roman revival that was experienced in all the arts at the time: tales of gods, goddesses, demigods, heroes, and the humans who championed them or ran afoul of their heavenly conflicts on Earth. The music was highly ornamented, as were the sets and costumes. The productions could be complex to the point of absurdity, perhaps including rotund singers in harnesses hovering above the stage by mechanical winches to simulate flying.

Often, all the roles were sung by men. Some of those men were *castrati,* who had been surgically altered during their youth in order to be able to sing roles in the upper vocal range.

The French Revolution (1789–1799) and the subsequent regime changes were the catalyst of and fodder for literature and theater in France and throughout Europe. In opera, the first works with contemporary subjects—real people in relatively real situations—were composed.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart tried his hand at opera with the comic *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786) and the fantastic, symbolic *The Magic Flute* (1791). While Mozart's comic operas often feature realistic characters, they were not meant to be taken seriously.

Beethoven's *Fidelio*

Ludwig van Beethoven's only opera, *Fidelio,* is an example of a work with contemporary subjects. This ode to courage and hope, written in 1805, grew from the composer's republican fervor after his once-revered Napoleon marched upon Beethoven's beloved Vienna. *Fidelio* was set in eighteenth-century Spain

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just after France's Reign of Terror. The work was based on Jean Nicholas Bouilly's *Léonore, ou l'amour conjugal* (1789), about the author's personal experiences during the Revolution.

In brief summary, Beethoven's hero Florestan is wrongly imprisoned. He is saved by his wife, Leonora, who disguises herself as a man and charms her way into the jailer's good graces. Leonora is aided by Florestan's nationalist brothers, who fight for freedom. The motif of submission to fate is voiced through Florestan's character, while the hope, courage, and all-powerful love that make it possible to persevere is brought to life in Leonora. These are themes that resound throughout opera's stories, characters, and settings.

Grand Opera

From its roots in nineteenth-century Paris and a parallel evolution in China to today's elaborate productions in opera houses around the world, the art form known as grand opera has raised the storyteller's art and skills to new heights.

Grand operas, which are large-scale operatic spectacles based on historical or pseudohistorical librettos, originated in Paris. But opera did not achieve its truly grand status until the nineteenth century.

Verdi

In Italy, opera came into its own with the work of Italian nationalist Giuseppe Verdi. The composer used opera as a means to voice his political ethics and to explore the human spirit. His melodies became the popular hits of the day in Europe and America.

Verdi never forgot his humble beginnings, his connection to the land, and the struggles of the common people. His operas focused on the themes of love, death, sacrifice, nobility, treachery, family, homeland, cultural identity, and war. Verdi's works include *Rigoletto* (1851), *La Traviata* (1853), *Aida* (1871), and his two operas based on works by Shakespeare, *Othello* (1887) and his only comic opera, *Falstaff* (1893). A brief summary of *Rigoletto* follows.

Rigoletto

Rigoletto was inspired by French author Victor Hugo's 1832 verse drama *Le roi s'amuse* (literally, *The King Amuses Himself*), which was a thinly veiled caricature of King Louis-Philippe. Verdi changed the names of Hugo's characters to avoid political complications.

The main character, Rigoletto, hates everyone but his daughter Giulianna. He is the hunchbacked jester to the womanizing Duke of Mantua. Rigoletto's bitter mockery leads Count Monterone to place a curse on the jester. Then Rigoletto's daughter falls in love with the libertine duke.

Rigoletto plans to assassinate the duke to avenge his daughter's honor but accidentally kills his daughter instead. It is the curse, Rigoletto says. He is left a broken man.

The Russian Group of Five

At the time that Verdi was writing his grand operas, the Group of Five was formed in Russia. Five composers, Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov, Aleksandr Borodin, César Cui, Modest Mussorgsky, and Mily Balakirev, formed the group to concentrate on composing music on Russian themes.

In the field of opera, Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, and Mussorgsky were successful. Borodin was a chemist by profession and left his one operatic work, *Prince Igor,* which was based on the twelfth-century epic of the same name, to be finished by Rimsky-Korsakov in 1887. Mussorgsky's opera, *Boris Godunov* (1873), was based on the life and death of the historical Czar Boris.

Rimsky-Korsakov was the most prolific of the Russian opera composers, completing fifteen operas in all:

- *The Maiden of Pskov* (1872)
- *The May Night* (1878)
- *The Snowmaiden/Snegurochka* (1881)
- *Mlada* (opera-ballet; 1890)
- *The Christmas Night* (1895)
- *Sadko* (1896)

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- *Mozart and Salieri* (1897)
- *The Tsar's Bride* (1898)
- *Vera Sheloga* (1898)
- *The Tale of Tsar Saltan* (1899)
- *Kashtshey the Immortal* (1901)
- *Servilia* (1901)
- *Pan Voyevoda* (1903)
- *The Legend of the Invisible Town Kitez* (1904)
- *Le coq d'or* (*The Golden Cockerel*; 1907)

The subject matter of these works ranges from the historic *Mozart and Salieri,* which dealt with the rivalry between those two composers, to the folkloric *Le coq d'or.* All of Rimsky-Korsakov's operas have intriguing plots, such as the folkloric tale of the minstrel Sadko.

Sadko

Sadko was a poor but talented and daring minstrel. He wagered his head against the wealth of the Novgorod merchants that he would catch golden fish in Lake Ilmen. Aided by the daughter of the sea king, Sadko won the wager and used his winnings to take a voyage.

Sadko's ship was overtaken by a storm, and the crew offered Sadko to the sea king as a sacrifice. The crew was spared, and Sadko went to live in the sea king's domain.

Sadko played upon his gusli, a zitherlike instrument, and the sea king and his court were soon engaged in a frenzied dance. Their dancing caused a fierce gale.

Saint Nicholas intervened on behalf of seafarers above and threw the gusli to the ground. He ordered Sadko home and transformed the sea king's daughter, who had fallen in love with Sadko, into the Volkhov River. The city of Novgorod now stands on the banks of the river. Sadko and his wife were joyously reunited.

Giacomo Puccini

At the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, another Italian composer, Giacomo Puccini, explored passion in new ways. Puccini's stories were based on the lives of (almost) ordinary people. Puccini composed thirteen operas:

- *Le Villi* (*The Vily*; 1884)
- *Edgar* (1889)
- *Manon Lescaut* (1893)
- *La bohème* (*The Bohemian Girl*; 1896)
- *Tosca* (1900)
- *Madama Butterfly* (1904; revised 1905)
- *La fanciulla del west* (*The Girl of the Golden West*; 1910)
- *La rondine* (*The Swallow;* 1917)
- *Il Trittico* (*The trilogy*; 1918): *Il tabarro* (*The Cloak*), *Suor Angelica* (*Sister Angelica*), *Gianni Schicchi*
- *Turandot* (1926)

One of the most topical of Puccini's operas was *Madama Butterfly.* This story inspired Andrew Lloyd Webber's twentieth-century musical *Miss Saigon* (1989).

Madama Butterfly

Japan was forced to enter into trade with the West in 1854 after two centuries of isolation. Puccini created a tale of the clash of cultures in *Madama Butterfly.*

A young Japanese geisha named Cio-Cio San, who was known as Madama Butterfly, gave up honor and family when she fell in love with U.S. Navy Lieutenant B.F. Pinkerton. They married in a Japanese ceremony, but poor Cio-Cio San did not know that such weddings meant nothing in America. Pinkerton left her behind to return home. Years passed and she remained certain that he would return, especially since she had given birth to his son.

Pinkerton did return—but with his American wife. Alone and betrayed, Cio-Cio San sent away her son and committed suicide. Pinkerton returned too late to stop her.

In this tragedy, there is no redemption, no happy reunion before death (as there is in *La bohème*), and no love to transform the pain. Life goes on for the conquerors, but they are never the same after their encounter with the East.

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Opera and Storytelling

Opera is one of the most elaborate forms of storytelling. The gripping tales conveyed in this grand art form often have a familiar ring. Imagination is always grounded in human truths, in the familiar, in a sense of, "Yes, I've heard a story like that!" or, even more powerfully, "I have felt that way, too." No matter how fantastic the stories become, it is still the element of reality that gives life to this art and to our culture.

Alexandra Honigsberg and Josepha Sherman

See also: Freischutz; Ring Cycle, The.

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Oral History

The term *oral history* refers to the study of history through the use of stories, accounts, and descriptions culled from interviews. An oral history is a record of the past that has been transmitted through verbal sources rather than the printed scholarship of orthodox historians.

Studying history through oral sources involves collecting and documenting stories. Although not all oral-history resources are narratives, stories provide material that is essential for understanding the verbal legacy that is part of a community's history.

Oral history is a fascinating but somewhat contentious form of research. Advocates of oral history assert that verbal accounts are essential for documenting history that is not included in books, newspapers, and other printed sources. They claim that oral sources can be used to reconstruct the history of individuals and communities, and they argue that oral historians' methods provide broader perspectives on the received history.

Critics of oral history argue that the method does not necessarily provide historical accuracy. They see it as an opening for sketchy and biased scholarship. To address some of the challenges in documenting oral history, writers must be sure to blend the two methods, by gathering information through storytelling and reporting with historical accuracy.

William Lynwood Montell

Folklorist William Lynwood Montell's landmark work, *The Saga of Coe Ridge: A Study of Oral History* (1970), reconstructed the history of a small African American community in rural Kentucky through oral sources. Using his knowledge of storytelling, Montell crafted a method for integrating the study of folklore with oral history.

Montell crafted techniques for recognizing how traditional elements, such as tale types and motifs, might influence the manner in which informants shape their accounts of history. Montell's systematic use of folk narratives as part of oral-history research is a method that has benefited all oral historians.

Truthful Accounts of the Past

Much of oral history is preserved in compelling narratives told by those who witnessed historic events firsthand. Reading these accounts provides a window to the past. The narratives also provide rich resources for constructing a history that better represents people's lives.

Henry Glassie, a folklorist and professor at Indiana University, shares Montell's approach. Glassie uses oral history to reconstruct views about the past, but also to point out why storytellers value their narratives. Glassie discovered that the Irish storytellers he interviewed considered stories about certain time periods to be central to their community's basic values.

The storyteller Hugh Nolan of Ballymenone in Northern Ireland, for example, regarded the telling of stories about history to be a sacred obligation. Storytelling, to Nolan,

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preserved a truthful account of the past. Nolan equated well-told stories with truth, and he regarded this connection as the essential base for understanding history.

Nolan asserted that evaluating stories with the same scrutiny that historians apply to written texts provides a better understanding of the past.

Gregory Hansen

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Orestes and Electra

(Greek)

The story of Orestes and Electra is one of the most powerful and tragic in Greek mythology. It involves a murdered father whose son is trapped in a situation he cannot escape. The only way the son can avenge his father is by killing his mother.

King Agamemnon, ruler of Mycenae and the commander of the Greek army, was the brother of King Menelaus of Sparta, husband of Helen of Troy. After Helen was abducted, Agamemnon and Menelaus set off to fight in the Trojan War. While Agamemnon was away, his wife, Clytemnestra, took Aegisthus as her lover. When Agamemnon returned, Clytemnestra and Aegisthus murdered him.

The murderers had planned to kill Agamemnon's only male heir, Orestes, as well. But Agamemnon's daughter, Electra, saved the life of her younger brother. She sent him off to live with his uncle, King Strophius. Orestes and Strophius's son, Pylades, became fast friends.

Electra did not allow Orestes to forget their father's murder or the fact that it was Orestes's responsibility, as the only son of the king, to avenge him. Electra sent him daily messages while she endured life under the corrupt rule of her mother and her mother's lover.

Bound by duty to avenge his father, Orestes also was bound by filial ties not to hurt his mother. But the former duty both to father and to king overcame the latter. When Orestes was grown, he accepted his fate, went back to his father's country, and killed Aegisthus and Clytemnestra.

The fierce, avenging semideities called Erinyes, promptly seized upon Orestes for committing matricide and drove him frantically from land to land. Orestes's friend Pylades accompanied him in his wanderings and watched over him.

At last, the desperate Orestes took refuge with Athene in her patron city of Athens. The goddess understood the difficulty of his situation, gave him protection, and appointed a divine court to decide his fate. In the end, Orestes was acquitted.

In some versions of the myth, Electra married Orestes's friend Pylades.

This story has been told and retold in many versions, including Greek plays by Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles, which focus on the story of Electra. Later works include composer Richard Strauss's opera simply titled *Elektra* (1909). In Eugene O'Neill's trilogy of plays *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931), the story is set during the American Civil War.

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Osiris

(Egyptian)

Osiris was the chief of the Egyptian gods and the primary Egyptian funerary god, or ruler of the dead. The earliest mention of

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Osiris dates to the fifth dynasty (c. 2513–2374 B.C.E.). Originally a fearsome god, Osiris transformed into a benign deity over time.

Osiris usually was depicted as a green- or black-skinned mummified man wearing the tall white crown of Upper Egypt. The color of Osiris's skin evokes not only putrefaction of a corpse but fertile earth and new vegetation.

In Egyptian mythology, Osiris ruled Egypt after his father, the sky god Shu. The early kings were believed to become Osiris when they died. Later, about 2100 B.C.E., this was extended to include all citizens. Like the king, every man and woman was referred to as "Osiris so-and-so" after death.

One of the main sources of information on Osiris is *De Iside et Osiride,* written by the Greek author Plutarch in the first century of the common era. Many of the details in Plutarch's work can be traced to pharaonic Egyptian sources.

The major elements of the Egyptian story can be summarized as follows: Osiris, son of the sky goddess, Nut, and the earth god, Geb, ruled Egypt until Seth, his brother, killed him. Osiris's sisters, Isis (who was also his wife) and Nephthys, found his body. The god Anubis helped to resurrect Osiris, who then became lord of the netherworld. His son, Horus, fought Seth for the crown of Egypt. Horus ultimately triumphed.

The cult of Osiris was widespread, but his special centers of worship were Abydos in middle Egypt and Busiris in the delta. Osiris absorbed the traits and names of several local deities, such as Khentiamentiu, the jackal god of Abydos. At Memphis, Osiris became closely identified with the falcon god, Sokar. In Greco-Roman times, he merged with the sacred Apis bull to become the popular deity Serapis.

Osiris also is associated with certain celestial bodies: the constellation Orion, the star Sirius, and the "undying" circumpolar stars. Osiris

In this scene from an Egyptian Book of the Dead, Osiris, in his role of god of the afterlife, has green skin to show his status as a resurrected god. A deceased husband and wife honor Osiris as they pass safely on into the afterlife. *(Scala/Art Resource, NY)*

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is also connected with the *ba,* or soul, of the sun god, Re and, as such, is the Sun during its nocturnal underworld journey.

Noreen Doyle

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Ovid

(43 B.C.E.–17 C.E.)

Ovid is the pen name of the Roman poet and storyteller Publius Ovidius Naso.

Ovid was born in Sulmo, now Sulmona, Italy, to an aristocratic family. His parents decided that the best career for their son was to practice law, so the young Ovid studied rhetoric and law in Rome and Athens. During that time, he began to realize that he wanted to become a poet. With a young man's certainty, he also intended to become rich and famous.

Ovid traveled through part of the Near East and Sicily with the poet Macer and then returned to Rome to practice law. In a short while, Ovid knew that he much preferred the literary society of Rome to the life of a lawyer or judge, and he decided to pursue his dream of being a poet.

Ovid has been called the most brilliant poet of his generation. His earliest poems included *Amores,* which was a fictitious romance between Ovid and a woman he called Corinna. This was followed by *Heroides,* a collection of love letters between mythological lovers, and *Ars Amatoria,* or *The Art of Love,* an instructional set of books for men and women.

The work that is most useful to storytellers and folklorists is his *Metamorphoses.* Written when Ovid was fifty-two years old, it is possibly his greatest work. The title is a Greek word meaning changes of shape. In the fifteen books of the *Metamorphoses,* Ovid deals with numerous mythological, legendary, and historical figures of Greece and Rome, and he records the history of the world up to the reign of Augustus.

Ovid's life was ruined when the emperor Augustus banished him in 8 C.E., for reasons that are still unknown. He was sent to a fishing village on the coast of the Black Sea. Ovid spent the rest of his life hoping to be recalled to Rome, but he died in exile in 17 C.E.

See also: *Metamorphoses.*

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Owl Lore

Owls are found nearly everywhere in the world, and so owl lore spans the globe.

In ancient Babylon, in what is now Iraq, owls were protective figures. Women wore owl amulets to guard them during childbirth.

In ancient Greece, the owl was the sacred bird of the goddess of wisdom, Athena. Owls were protected and were therefore numerous in Athens, the goddess's titular city. Greek soldiers thought that in return for this protection, owls guarded them as well. The association with Athena may be what led to the Western idea of the wise old owl.

Owls did not fare so well with the Romans, who thought that an owl's hoot predicted imminent death. There was also a folk belief in Rome that witches transformed themselves into owls to suck the blood of babies.

Britain, Europe, and America

In England, the owl is sometimes used to predict the weather: Its screeches mean that cold

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weather is coming. Because of this link between owls and bad weather, it was the custom until the twentieth century to nail the body of an owl to a barn door to ward off lightning. In some parts of England, however, it is considered good luck to see an owl.

In Ireland, an owl that enters a house must be killed or it will take the household's luck with it. This belief may be linked to an old Celtic belief that the owl was an emissary from the underworld. In Scotland, it is bad luck to see an owl in the daylight.

The Germans believed that if an owl hooted as a child was being born, the child would be unhappy in life. Swedish folklore is equally negative about owls, associating them with witches. Polish folklore claims that an owl's hoot foretells ill fortune or death. The Russians and Ukrainians saw the owl as a harbinger of death, and, in Armenian folktales, owls often were associated with the devil.

There are folk beliefs about owls in various regions of the United States and in Canada. In the state of Illinois, for instance, it was believed that the death of an owl would be avenged. In Louisiana, it was thought that if someone heard an owl late at night, he or she must turn a left shoe upside down to avoid bad fortune. In Newfoundland, Canada, the hoot of a horned owl warns of approaching bad weather.

Asia, Africa, Australia, and the Middle East

Owl beliefs vary widely in Asia. The Burmese have a folktale explaining that an owl's face looks flattened as a result of a fight among birds. In India, folk cures are worked with owl meat or eyes, and the number of hoots an owl makes is considered prophetic—one hoot for death, two hoots for success, and so on. In Indonesia, the owl is considered both wise and prophetic, but in Malaysia owls are thought to eat babies.

The Chinese associate owls with thunder and lightning, and owl effigies placed in each corner of a home protect it from lightning strikes. In Japan, owl pictures and figurines ward off famine and epidemics.

Throughout sub-Saharan Africa, owls are generally thought to be the messengers or familiars of wizards and sorcerers. There is a Swahili belief that owls bring illness to children. In Cameroon and parts of Nigeria, the owl is never named but is cautiously called only "the bird that makes you afraid."

Certain aboriginal clans in Australia believe that owls are the souls of women, and bats are the souls of men. Therefore, both are sacred. But to the Maori of New Zealand, the owl is unlucky. In Samoa, the people can trace their descent from an owl.

The owl generally is considered a bird of ill omen in modern Arab lands. In Morocco, for instance, a folk belief claims that the hoot of an owl can kill babies. The same idea of the owl as an evil bird is found in Iran.

In Afghanistan, the owl is not considered quite so bad. There is, in fact, a folktale that tells that it was the owl that taught humans how to make fire with flint and steel.

Native American Beliefs

From the Pacific Northwest to Sioux territory, Native Americans consider owls to be mystical creatures. The Kwakiutl people of the Pacific Northwest held that owls were the souls of people and therefore should not be harmed. Tlingit warriors would go into battle hooting like owls to strike fear into their enemies.

In the Southwest, the Apache saw the owl as the most deeply feared of animals, the embodiment of the dead. Even dreaming of an owl meant approaching death. The Diné (also known as the Navajo) believed that the hoots of an owl could predict the future. The Hopi Indians saw burrowing owls as guardians of all underground things, including seed germination. They call them *ko'ko,* meaning "watcher of the dark."

The Cherokee believed that the eastern screech owl could cause illness as punishment for wrongdoers, and Dakota warriors saw the owl as a protective spirit. The Oglala Sioux admired the snowy owl, and successful warriors wore a cap of owl feathers to show their

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bravery. A Sioux society called the Owl Lodge believed that those who wore owl feathers would have keener eyesight.

The many aspects to the folklore of the owl ensure that storytellers have a rich and varied repertoire from which to choose.

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Palestinian Storytelling

In Palestinian society, especially before the advent of television and radio, the telling of tales was a main source of entertainment and a favorite way to pass the time. Storytelling in the Arab culture is an age-old practice that often centers on the family.

A generation ago, village children were told tales by a female elder while doing chores, such as cooking or knitting. Palestinian towns had designated guesthouses, called *madhafah,* where visitors were welcomed. At the madhafah, the men sat together and told stories. The storyteller, called a *hakawaty,* usually told his stories while playing a tune on a stringed instrument, such as an *oud,* depending on his skills. He might relate a humorous tale of marriage, a scary tale about war or ghouls, a farmer's tale about the destruction of his crops, or a shepherd's tale about the loss of his love.

Whether the tales were meant to be humorous, to teach history, or to provide a moral lesson, they always were meant to entertain. These tales provided a sense of unity and identity in a family, as they were passed down through many generations.

Stories of certain fictitious and humorous characters have been related from individual to individual in most, if not all, Arab families. Two examples are the foolish fellow, Juha, and Antar and Abla, the subjects of numerous romantic love stories.

Passed from grandfather to grandchild, from uncle to nephew, or from mother to child, tales were shared in all parts of society and throughout the Arab world.

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Panchatantra

(Indian)

The *Panchatantra* of India is one of the world's finest collections of tales. Its five volumes of animal fables originally were written in Sanskrit sometime between 100 B.C.E. and 500 C.E.

Tradition credits the writing of the *Panchatantra* to either a scholar named Bidpai or a Brahman named Vishnusharman. The word *bidpai* probably comes from the Sanskrit for "wise man" or "scholar," while Vishnusharman, who is mentioned in the *Panchatantra,* may be entirely fictional.

The *Panchatantra* is said to have been written as a manual to instruct three dim-witted

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princes on how to be a king. One translation refers to them as the "supreme blockheads." The five volumes include advice on how to rule, how to choose friends and ministers, and how to behave in proper kingly fashion.

Each of the volumes has a theme:

1. The Loss of Friends
2. The Winning of Friends
3. Crows and Owls
4. Loss of Gains
5. Ill-Considered Action

The stories are written in prose interspersed with verse, and each one ends with a moral. The *Panchatantra* is still in use in India today as a guide for parents who are trying to instill proper cultural values in their children.

See also: Indian Storytelling.

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Papyrus Westcar/Papyrus Berlin 3033

(Egyptian)

The Papyrus Westcar, also known as Papyrus Berlin 3033, contains a cycle of at least five interconnected tales. Probably written during the Second Intermediate Period (c. 1664–1569 B.C.E.), the papyrus contains tales told by the sons of Khufu, an Egyptian leader of the fourth dynasty, about marvels performed by priests.

Due to the papyrus's relatively poor state of preservation, only three of these tales are reasonably complete. Although liberties were taken with certain historical details, all but possibly one of the kings and princes in these stories have their basis in historical fact.

The papyrus rolls that make up the Papyrus Westcar were given to the Egyptologist Karl Richard Lepsius by Henry Westcar, who had acquired them in 1824 or 1825. Lepsius was unable to decipher the text, but it was finally translated by Egyptologist Adolf Erman in 1890.

The Wax Crocodile

Khufu's son, Khafre, who ruled Egypt from 2576 to 2551 B.C.E., told a story of the days of King Nebka.

The wife of Ubainer, a high-ranking priest, fell in love with a commoner. Ubainer's steward witnessed the affair and informed his master, who made a wax crocodile that was seven fingers long. As Ubainer instructed, when the steward saw the commoner in the garden, he threw the figurine into the pool. The wax crocodile grew to the size of nearly 11 feet (7 cubits) and dragged the wife's lover beneath the water.

Seven days later, when King Nebka paid a visit, Ubainer summoned the crocodile from the pool. It brought out the lover, unharmed. As the priest took hold of the creature, it became a wax figurine again.

The king determined that the crocodile should take the lover. The crocodile again came to life and disappeared into the pool with the young man, who was never seen again. As for Ubainer's wife, she was burned to death, and her remains were tossed into the river.

The Jeweled Pendant

Prince Bauefre, whose existence as a historical individual is uncertain, told the tale of Djedemankh, a priest and scribe who served Khufu's father, King Sneferu (c. 2649–2609 B.C.E.).

Djedemankh proposed to amuse the bored Sneferu by having beautiful women row a boat in the palace lake. The king, pleased by this idea, ordered up gilded oars, nets for the rowers to wear as dresses, and twenty of the most beautiful women.

This distraction went along pleasantly until the oarswoman who was timing the stroke lost a pendant from her hair. She stopped

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rowing and refused to begin again. Even when the king offered her a new pendant she preferred her own ornament to another just like it.

Djedemankh was summoned. By means of his magic, the priest took half the water in the lake and placed it atop the other half, enabling him to retrieve the pendant.

Hordedef's Tale

Hordedef's tale was set in the present, and had Khufu as one of its characters.

Djedi, a 110-year-old man, was capable of eating 100 loaves of bread, half an ox, and 100 jugs of beer. He was also capable of taming a lion, could restore a severed head, and knew the number of secret chambers of the god Thoth.

Khufu ordered Hordedef to fetch Djedi. The old man willingly agreed to accompany Hordedef back to the palace, where he performed a spell on two geese and a bull.

Next, Khufu asked Djedi the number of Thoth's chambers. Djedi did not have the answer, but he did know that the number was concealed in a certain place in Heliopolis. He told Khufu that he was unable to retrieve the number as the king requested, but the eldest of the lady Ruddjedet's unborn triplets would be able to do so.

"Who," the king asked, "is Ruddjedet?" Djedi claimed that she was the wife of a priest of the sun god, Re, and she was pregnant with three children of Re. The eldest would become high priest in Heliopolis. This made Khufu unhappy, so Djedi told him when Ruddjedet was due to give birth. Djedi was rewarded by being allowed to live, well provided for, with Hordedef.

When Ruddjedet's time arrived, Re sent three goddesses, disguised as musicians, to assist with the birth. Ruddjedet's three sons were born healthy, and the goddess Meskhenet decreed that each would become king of Egypt. The musicians were rewarded with a quantity of grain. The goddesses made three crowns and hid them in a grain sack for safekeeping.

Fourteen days later, when her postpartum seclusion had ended, Ruddjedet learned that the only grain in the house was that which belonged to the musicians. Ruddjedet bid her maid fetch it. The maid heard music, dancing, and shouting, the kinds of noises that usually accompanied a king, coming from within the sack. When the maid told Ruddjedet, she had the sack sealed inside a box, and she and her husband rejoiced.

Later, the maid was beaten after a quarrel with her mistress. To avenge herself, she resolved to tell Khufu that Ruddjedet had given birth to three kings. She attempted to enlist her half brother in this matter, but he was outraged and beat her. The maid went to fetch water and was taken by a crocodile.

The maid's half brother found Ruddjedet upset, because the maid had gone off to tell the king. The brother told Ruddjedet that the maid was dead. At this point, the papyrus ends.

Noreen Doyle

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Pegasus

(Greek)

In Greek mythology, Pegasus was a winged horse; a wild being that was ridden only once.

Pegasus's parents were the god of the seas, Poseidon, or, in some versions, sea foam, and the monstrous, snake-headed woman, Medusa. When the Greek hero Perseus beheaded Medusa, the winged horse sprang up from her neck.

The mortal hero Bellerophon needed Pegasus to help him slay the monstrous Chimera. While the horse was drinking from the well called Pirene, the hero Bellerophon stole up on

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him and caught him with a golden bridle, a gift from the goddess Athena. In the battle to control the winged horse, Bellerophon rode him to Mount Helicon, where, with one kick, Pegasus caused the spring of Hippocrene to flow. This spring is said to be the source of inspiration to poets.

After his success in bridling the wild beast, Bellerophon was overcome by arrogance. He ordered Pegasus to fly him up to Mount Olympus, the home of the gods.

Zeus was furious with the presumptuous mortal and sent an insect to sting the winged horse. Pegasus bucked Bellerophon off his back and flew away, becoming a constellation in the night sky.

See also: Bellerophon.

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Pele is the Hawaiian goddess of fire and volcanoes. This stylized Polynesian statue is made of wood and hair, and dates to the seventeenth or eighteenth century. A strong belief in Pele continues in modern Hawaii. *(© Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY)*

Pele/Madam Pele

(Hawaiian)

Pele, the Hawaiian goddess of fire and volcanoes, is a common figure in both ancient and modern stories of Hawaii. Although not one of the most powerful gods, Pele is the most familiar Hawaiian deity, and she is still worshipped today.

Pele is said to live inside the crater of the Kilauea volcano with her siblings and her dog. Her sisters are named mostly for clouds, and her brothers are associated with storms, earthquakes, and volcanic activity. Her favorite sibling is Hi'iaka, the youngest sister, whom Pele raised. Pele's entire family is associated with traditional hula and sorcery. Countless hulas and chants are dedicated to these deities.

Pele and her white dog are still said to appear around Kilauea. They may appear separately or together, and then vanish mysteriously. Some modern appearances seem to warn people away from danger or help people find something or somebody.

Pele's Anger

Pele, described as a Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian female, may appear as an old woman, a young woman, or a young girl. If she is old, her hair is gray to white. If she is young, her hair may be black, blond, or red, but red hair normally indicates that she is angry.

Often called Madam Pele out of respect and fear, she is as hot tempered as her volcanoes. She is swift to anger, swift to attack, and inclined to cool down only after major damage has been inflicted as retribution for some slight.

Punishment from Pele usually takes the form of a destructive lava flow sent to ruin

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people who have angered her. She kills people and destroys the homes of families who were not courteous and respectful when she visited in disguise.

She also sends lava flows to try to kill people who best her in sports. This is particularly true of those who beat her at her favorite sport, *holua,* a type of sledding generally done down grass-strewn runways. Pele usually attacks after the victor boasts of winning by skill rather than luck, or refuses to trade sporting equipment when Pele blames it for her loss.

Many rocks are said to be former rivals of Pele. Other rocks, rock formations, and even whole lava flows are said to be the results of Pele's punishments on mortals and deities who angered her. These remains are most often found in the districts of Puna, Ka'u, and Kona.

Pele is nearly as swift to reward good behavior as she is to punish those who anger her. The most common reward—especially for courtesy toward her when she travels in disguise—is to spare people and their homes from a lava flow, especially one sent to punish others who were disrespectful.

Pele Stories

Three stories stand out as particularly important to the Pele myth. These stories and various events in them are popular subjects of hulas and chants.

The story of how Pele came to Hawaii has many variations. Most versions agree that she was born in a distant land. She left that home and came to Hawaii. Starting in the north, at either the island of Niihau or the island of Kauai, she worked her way south, searching for a suitable home. Pele finally settled in the crater of the Kilauea volcano on the island of Hawaii, where her brothers and sisters joined her.

The story of Pele, Hi'iaka, and Lohiau is particularly long and involved. Either through dreams or in her travels, Pele saw and fell in love with Lohiau, a young and handsome chief of Kauai. From her home in Kilauea, she sent Hi'iaka to fetch Lohiau to be Pele's lover or husband. The journey proved quite hazardous and difficult, and took longer than Pele thought it should. Hi'iaka persevered in bringing Lohiau to Pele, resisting his amorous advances along the way.

When they got back to Kilauea, Hi'iaka and Lohiau found that Pele had killed one or more of the women she had promised to protect, out of anger over their slow return. Hi'iaka was furious with her sister and accepted Lohiau's embraces. When Pele saw this, she killed Lohiau. Hi'iaka resurrected him and as many of the dead women as she could save. In the end, Hi'iaka married Lohiau.

The story of Pele and Kamapua'a matches two of the shortest tempers among Hawaiian deities in a passionate but doomed love affair. Kamapua'a, the shape-changing pig god of Oahu, came to Hawaii to woo Pele. The goddess spurned his advances. Pele's sisters eventually talked her into inviting Kamapua'a to their home.

When they finally met, Kamapua'a and Pele fell in love. They married and lived together for a while, but Kamapua'a's black rages and practical jokes angered Pele. The breakup of the god and goddess was spectacular, as he fought her fire and lava magic with his water magic. The battle resulted in the two deities' dividing the island of Hawaii between them: Kamapua'a took the lush, green north, and Pele claimed the south.

Anne Elizabeth Baldwin

See also: Hi'iaka.

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Penelope

(Greek)

In the *Odyssey,* the Greek epic probably created by Homer in the eighth century, Penelope was the faithful, loving wife of the hero-king Odysseus.

When Odysseus was forced to take part in the Trojan War, he left Penelope at home with their young son, Telemachus. After ten years passed, the local nobles began to think that Odysseus either was dead or was never coming back. Whoever married Penelope would claim the throne.

Penelope had no desire to marry any of these suitors. She still loved her husband and was sure he would return. But she also knew that she had to keep the suitors happy to avoid a riot. So she promised she would select one of them for her new husband if they would let her finish her weaving.

They agreed, thinking this would be only a short delay. But Penelope, who did her weaving by day, secretly picked out all the threads at night. And so the weaving was never near to being finished. By the time the irate suitors discovered the trick, Odysseus returned to save his wife, son, and throne.

Today, Penelope is often viewed as a symbol of patience and constancy.

See also: Homer; Odysseus; *Odyssey.*

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Peri/Pari

(Persian)

In Persian and Islamic mythology, a *peri* is a beautiful fairy being. In the myths of India, this being is called a *pari.*

The origin for the folk belief in the peri may be in the religion of Zoroastrianism, which has a category of benign spirits known as *paraiaka.* Some Persian traditions say that peris were originally fallen angels or that they descended from those lost angels. Peris are the enemies of the *deevs,* or demons, and the djinn, who overpower the peris whenever possible and lock them up in iron cages. In world folklore, iron is the metal that is poisonous to fairy beings.

In the folklore of Central Asia, Iran, and Afghanistan, a peri generally will appear in the form of a beautiful woman, whose parallel in Western folktales would be a fairy princess. The home of the peris is Faerie, which is said to be located on "the other side of Mount Qaf," the mountain that divides the human world from that of the fairies. The peris are ruled by their father, the king, and travel magically by air from Faerie to the mortal world whenever they wish to encounter humans.

In some folktales, the wild goats known as ibexes are said to belong to the peris. Unwary hunters who come across a sleeping peri or who kill more than their share of the ibexes will be punished, although there is no codified form of punishment in the tales.

In some tales, a human woman is taken, either voluntarily or by abduction, to watch a peri ceremony. After this experience, it is sometimes necessary to cure the woman by various folk religious methods to remind her that she is not a peri.

Sometimes a peri and a human may wed, though those marriages seldom last long. Usually, the peri leaves her human husband to return to her people.

Pari is still a common name for women in Iran. In Turkey, a woman might be named Perihan, or queen of the peris.

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Perrault, Charles

(1628–1703)

Charles Perrault was a seventeenth-century French intellectual, royal official, and writer. He is responsible for bringing folktales to the attention of the French literary audience during the reign of the Sun King, Louis XIV (r. 1643–1715). This work assured Perrault's place in both literary history and the history of folklore as the first modern writer to transform oral narratives into literary classics.

Perrault was born in Paris on January 12, 1628, the youngest of five surviving sons in an upper-class bourgeois family. He attended the Collège de Beauvais, a private secondary school in Paris, but he finished his education on his own.

In 1651, following in the footsteps of his father and eldest brother, Perrault became a lawyer. But the talented writer and poet was soon noticed by French minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert, under whose patronage he prospered. Colbert was officially the king's superintendent and director general of buildings. He was also the king's personal artistic director. Colbert gave Perrault the opportunity to display his artistic flair and intellectual skills.

The French courtier and writer Charles Perrault is best known for his retellings of such folktales as "Cinderella." The author often entertained the royal court with his sophisticated versions of the tales. *(Roger Viollet/Getty Images)*

Perrault was an accomplished author of several literary works that included poetry, classical parodies, and even an attempt at an epic. But he is known primarily for his retellings of peasant fairy tales, which he rewrote to appeal to the sophisticated court nobility.

Perrault's attempt to arrange the tales in verse in 1695 was unsuccessful, so he recast them in prose two years later. The prose work was called *Histoires ou contes du temps passé, avec des moralités: Contes de ma Mère l'Oye* (*Histories or Tales of Past Times, with Morals: Tales of Mother Goose*). It included versions of "Sleeping Beauty," "Little Red Riding Hood," "Blue Beard," "Puss in Boots," "The Fairies," "Cinderella," "Ricky with the Tuft," and "Tom Thumb."

Perrault was vague about his sources, but he did acknowledge that the tales were not original. He altered the tales to fit the noble court's tastes, but he maintained their original folk essence. Perrault understood and appreciated the appeal of folklore more than a hundred years before the Brothers Grimm began their collection.

Perrault outlived all his siblings, his wife, and his son, Pierre, and spent the last few years of his life writing court poetry and his memoirs. He died on May 15, 1703.

Maria Teresa Agozzino

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Phantom Bus

(English)

Most ghosts are the spirits of previously animate beings, such as humans or animals, but sometimes people claim to have seen the ghost of an inanimate object. One such apparition was the phantom bus of London.

In the mid-1930s, a ghostly, bright red double-decker bus apparently made several appearances. It always was witnessed at the intersection of Saint Marks Road and Cambridge Gardens in North Kensington, London, at a sharp curve in the road.

The first sighting, according to popular lore, was in 1934. A motorist, who had crashed his car but fortunately was unhurt, told the police that he was making a turn when a bright red double-decker bus came hurtling toward him, forcing him off the road. The motorist also reported that the bus lights had been on, but that he was unable to see a driver or any passengers. When the police looked into the story, it was found that no buses were scheduled in the region at the time of the sighting.

Other accidents happened. Always, the story was the same: A red double-decker bus appeared, forced cars off the road, and then vanished.

The London department of transportation straightened out the sharp curve in the 1940s. After that, there were no more accidents or sightings of the phantom bus, but the tale is still being told.

See also: Ghosts and Hauntings.

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Phantom Ships/ Ghost Ships

Stories about phantom or ghost ships that sail by themselves or with a ghostly crew can be found in most regions located near bodies of water. North American storytellers can find a good many stories in the communities on their own coasts and lakes.

Atlantic Phantoms

The eastern shores of Canada and the northern United States face the rough, storm-swept Atlantic Ocean. For at least 200 years, people on the coasts of Canada's Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick have reported seeing "a burning ship out there." Sometimes, they report seeing the ship's clear outline. In other cases, they see only a mysterious ball of fire, or a ball of fire that resolves into the shape of a ship. Those who try to approach the ship witness it vanishing into thin air.

In New Brunswick, the ship is thought to be the nineteenth-century sailing vessel *Colbum,* which was lost during a violent storm in 1838. Others call it the *John Craig,* since a ship of that name was lost in the region. Along the coast of Nova Scotia, the ship was thought to be the *Isabella,* which disappeared soon after setting sail in 1868. Others argue that it is a vessel that carried immigrants to Canada, or perhaps it is even a pirate ship.

Ghosts of the Great Lakes

The Great Lakes can be as deadly and storm-tossed as the North Atlantic. Perhaps the earliest known sighting of a ghost ship there was of the *Griffon,* which vanished on Lake Michigan in September of 1678. Several sailors claimed to see it in the years that followed.

The schooner *Western Reserve* sank in Lake Michigan in 1892, yet it is still occasionally sighted. The *W.H. Gilcher,* a coal steamer lost in the Straits of Mackinac between Lake Michigan

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and Lake Huron in 1982, still appears from time to time, occasionally with a companion ship.

Once every seven years, the schooner *Erie Board of Trade* returns. This ghost ship disappeared in 1883 and has been sighted on Lake Superior ever since.

Perhaps the most recent phantom ship in the Great Lakes is the *Edmund Fitzgerald,* an ore freighter that sank in Lake Superior on November 10, 1975. It was sighted by a commercial vessel ten years later.

The *Baychinco*

One phantom ship had nothing of the supernatural to it, but it was decidedly unusual. When the freighter *Baychinco* became stuck in the ice off Alaska in 1931, a storm struck so violently that all hands abandoned ship. They were safer waiting out the storm on the thick ice than staying on board.

When the storm was over, the *Baychinco* was gone. The ship had been freed of the ice during the storm, had broken its moorings, and had sailed off on its own. It was said to be seen for years afterward in the region, until a final sighting was reported in 1964.

See also: *Flying Dutchman*; Ghosts and Hauntings.

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Phoenix

(Egyptian and Greek)

The phoenix was a legendary bird associated with ancient Greek and Egyptian mythology.

In Egypt, the phoenix was generally portrayed as the *benu,* a heron, or heronlike bird, although Egyptian texts sometimes described

In this double image, the phoenix at left pecks at vegetation, and the phoenix at right lies in the flames waiting to be reborn. The picture comes from a bestiary, a book of natural and unnatural creatures written in medieval Latin. *(© Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)*

a bird resembling an eagle. The phoenix was associated with the Egyptian sun god, Re. Since the Sun seemed to die every night and return to life each day, the phoenix became a symbol of resurrection and immortality. As such, it often was painted on sarcophagi.

The Greeks took the concept of the phoenix even further, linking it with Apollo, in his aspect of sun god. The Greek phoenix lived in Arabia. Every morning at dawn, it bathed in a cool well, then sang so beautifully that Apollo would stop his chariot to listen. The brief pause created the brightness of the sunrise.

When the solitary phoenix felt itself near death, which occurred every 500 to 1,000 years, it built a nest of aromatic wood and set it on fire. The flames consumed the phoenix and a new (or renewed) phoenix sprang up from the pyre. The new phoenix embalmed the ashes of the prior phoenix in an egg of fragrant myrrh, and then flew to Heliopolis, the City of the Sun. There, it left the egg on the sun god's altar.

The phoenix has been associated by some scholars with two other sacred birds, or bird-beings, the Hindu Garuda and the Chinese *feng-huang.*

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See also: Reincarnation.

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Pixies

(English)

Pixies, which also are known as piskeys or little people, are small, mischievous beings from English folklore, particularly the tales from Cornwall, Dartmoor, and Devon. The pixies usually are pictured with pointed ears and dressed in green clothing, the traditional fairy color.

Folklorists generally consider pixies to be true fairies, kin to the brownies and even to the leprechauns. But there also are medieval Christian tales from Dartmoor that claim that the pixies originally were humans who were not good enough for heaven or bad enough for hell, and so they were shrunken and returned to Earth. Another medieval tale from the same region claims that the pixies originally were druids who refused to become Christians.

Whatever their folkloric origin, all pixies are traditionally said to enjoy playing tricks on humans, doing such mischief as stealing possessions or taking horses and riding them all night. In the morning, the only signs that such a night ride took place are the horse's weariness and tangled mane.

Humans who become lost on the trackless moors of Dartmoor are said to have been "pixie led," or led astray by the pixies. It is said that if travelers feel the onset of the pixie spell, they can turn their coats inside out to confuse the pixies and escape.

In many cases, the tales of those being pixie led end happily, with the human eventually finding the way back home. There are exceptions to this, however. Some follow the pixies and never return. A Devon farmhand named Jan Coo was lost after following voices that called his name. He was never seen again.

There are several ways to placate the pixies. Farmers can leave out saucers of milk or bowls of food for them. If the pixies approve of the gifts, they might even tidy up the farm overnight.

Pixies also have been featured in fantasy fiction. They appear, for instance, in J.K. Rowling's novel *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (1998), not as mischief makers but as nasty nuisances that must be caught and kept caged.

See also: Brownies.

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Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl

(Aztec)

In the Aztec myth *Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl,* the theme of the star-crossed lovers is used to show how Mexico's two most famous volcanoes, Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl, came to be.

Iztaccíhuatl, which means "white lady," was the beautiful daughter of an Aztec emperor in the Valley of Mexico. Unfortunately, she fell in love with Popocatépetl, a mere captain of warriors. He was not deemed to be of high enough rank for an emperor's daughter. Some versions of the story add that they were not of the same people, which created another barrier between them.

The couple went to Iztaccíhuatl's father and begged to be allowed to marry, despite the difference in their status. The emperor did not refuse them completely. Instead, he told

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them that he would agree to their marriage only if Popocatépetl first conquered an enemy tribe and brought back their leader's head. Some versions add that the emperor had grown too old to fight and that the enemy was already attacking, or that the emperor never expected the young man to return and had already planned to wed his daughter to a more appropriate suitor.

After several months of combat, a warrior who hated Popocatépetl sent a false message to the emperor. It claimed that Popocatépetl had died in battle. When Iztaccíhuatl heard this, she pined away and died of sadness.

As the emperor prepared his daughter's funeral, Popocatépetl returned victorious from battle. When he found his beloved Iztaccíhuatl dead, he was struck with agonizing grief. Taking her body in his arms, he carried her away and gently set her down, as though she were merely sleeping. Popocatépetl knelt beside Iztaccíhuatl until he died of grief.

The gods took pity on the star-crossed lovers, covered them with a soft blanket of snow, and turned them into two mountains.

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Popol Vuh

(Mayan)

The *Popol Vuh* is the Quiché Mayan book of creation. It recounts the stories of gods and men from the beginning of the world to the founding of the Quiché kingdoms in Guatemala in the first millennium C.E. The story was first written down in the sixteenth century, during the early years of Spanish rule, by Mayan nobles who wanted to preserve their heritage.

The original manuscript document was rediscovered by a priest named Francisco Ximénez in the early eighteenth century. Ximénez made a copy and wrote out a Spanish translation. This copy survives to this day. It was acquired by the University of San Carlos in Guatemala in 1830 but was taken by a French priest to Paris in the 1860s. In 1911, it was acquired by the Newberry Library in Chicago, where it remains.

The *Popol Vuh,* or *Council Book,* begins with the gods assembling to design the world. They wanted to create humans but failed in their first three attempts. When they finally succeeded, they went on to create a set of twins.

The first set of twins was One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu, who were sons of Xpiyacoc, the divine matchmaker, and Xmucane, the divine midwife. One Hunahpu and Blood Woman, the daughter of one of the lords of the underworld, eventually had another set of twins. These twins were Hunahpu and Xbalanque, also known as the Hero Twins.

The Quiché were interested in the cycles of the seasons and the orientation and movement of bodies in the heavens. So the adventures of the twins often mirror seasonal and astronomical cycles, especially those of the planet Venus.

The cycle of death and rebirth is represented in the story when One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu travel to the underworld to die. After their death, the skull of One Hunahpu is still able to engender children by spitting on Blood Woman, who rises to the earth. Blood Woman's sons later journey to the underworld, overcome the lords, and rise as the Sun and Moon.

Following the tale of the Hero Twins, who are not truly human, the *Popol Vuh* returns to the tale of the gods' fourth attempt to create humankind. This time, they succeed, creating the first people: Jaguar Quitze, Jaguar Night, Mahucutah, and True Jaguar, the ancestors of the Quiché Maya.

See also: Epics.

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Priam, King

(Greek)

In Greek mythology and in the *Iliad,* Priam was the last king of Troy, the ruler of the city during the Trojan War.

Priam was an honorable, dignified man, who was respectful to the gods. Priam's wife was Hecuba, sometimes spelled Hecube. Priam had at least fifty sons and fifty daughters with Hecuba and various other women. The best known of his children were the princes Hector and Paris and the tragic princess Cassandra.

Most of Priam's sons died in the Trojan War, including his firstborn, Hector, who was slain by the great Greek warrior Achilles. The king went alone to Achilles's tent to beg for Hector's body so he might give it a proper burial. Achilles pitied the old man and returned the body to him.

Later, as Priam clung to the altar of Zeus on the night that Troy fell, Achilles's son Neoptolemus killed him.

See also: *Iliad;* Trojan War.

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Princess in the Tower

The folk motif of the princess in the tower is part of an ancient traditional tale type. In these tales, a princess is kept alone or imprisoned in a tower until she is rescued or won by the hero. In a variant of the basic story, the princess, or sometimes a prince, escapes from the tower at the beginning of the story to find her own destiny.

The tower is constructed of various materials in the different stories. It may be made of glass or of ordinary stone. Usually, it has no obvious entrance or exit.

One of the earliest versions of the princess-in-the-tower tale comes from Egypt in the first millennium B.C.E. Usually called "The Doomed Prince," or "The Prince and His Three Fates," it contains two variations of the motif.

In the first motif variation, the prince is kept in a tower by his father to keep him from his fate. In the second variation, the princess is kept in a tower by her father so that only the best man can reach her. The prince leaves his tower and rescues the princess.

A Celtic version of the tale appears in the story of Dierdre, one of the "Three Tragic Tales of Erin." Dierdre is held captive but eventually escapes and winds up as a traditionally star-crossed lover.

A more familiar version is the European tale of the princess in the glass tower or atop a glass mountain. The hero must ride up the mountain or rescue the princess from the tower. In this type of tale, the princess is merely a cipher, a prize to be won.

Perhaps the most familiar version of this tale is the Grimm Brothers' "Rapunzel," in which Rapunzel's long hair provides the only way in and out of the tower. In this tale, of course, true love conquers all.

See also: Tale Types.

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Prometheus

(Greek)

In Greek mythology, Prometheus was the wisest of the Titans, who were the supreme rulers of the universe until they were overthrown by Zeus. Prometheus's name means "forethought," and he was able to foretell the future.

When Zeus revolted against Cronos, Prometheus and his slower-witted brother, Epimetheus (whose name means "afterthought"), deserted the other Titans and fought on Zeus's side. Because they had sided with Zeus, Prometheus and Epimetheus were spared imprisonment in Tartarus, the underworld.

The brothers were given the task of creating humans and animals. Prometheus shaped the first men out of mud, and Athena breathed life into the clay figures. Prometheus gave Epimetheus the task of giving the creatures of the earth their speed, strength, wings, and so on. Unfortunately, by the time he got to man, Epimetheus had given out all the good qualities, and there were none left for man. So Prometheus gave humanity the ability to stand upright as the gods did, and he also gave them fire.

A sixth-century B.C.E. Greek drinking cup illustrates Prometheus (right) being punished by Zeus for giving fire to humans. Every day, a vulture tears out Prometheus's liver, and, every night, the liver grows back. At left, the Titan Atlas holds up the world. *(Scala/Art Resource, NY)*

Prometheus loved humans more than he did the Olympians, who had, after all, sent most of his family to Tartarus. Zeus ordered that all men must give the gods a portion of every animal they killed. Prometheus made two piles, one with just bones wrapped in juicy fat to make them look richer and the other with the good meat made to look thin. He then asked Zeus to choose one. Zeus picked the pile of bones. Since he had given his word, Zeus had to accept the poorer share for future sacrifices.

In his anger over the trick, Zeus took fire away from man. However, Prometheus lit a torch from the Sun and brought it back again. Zeus was enraged and inflicted a terrible punishment on both man and Prometheus.

Zeus punished man by sending the woman Pandora. When she took the lid off the jar she carried, evil, hard work, and disease were released on Earth.

Prometheus's punishment was to be fastened with unbreakable chains to a rock on a mountaintop. Each day, an eagle tore out his liver, and every night the liver grew back. There he was to stay for all eternity, unless he agreed to tell Zeus which of his own children would overthrow him. The only other way Prometheus could be freed was if an immortal agreed to die for him and a hero killed the eagle and broke the chains.

Prometheus never gave in. Eventually, Cheiron the immortal Centaur was painfully wounded and wished to die. He gave his life in order to free Prometheus. The hero Hercules killed the eagle and broke the chains.

In the modern world, Prometheus has become a symbol of the righteous rebel who refuses to give in to tyranny.

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Proverbs

Proverbs are brief sayings that present a truth or some bit of useful wisdom. They usually are based on common sense or practical experience and are attributed to a specific author or folk tradition.

Proverbs often are passed along by word of mouth, but written collections have been assembled. Perhaps the oldest of these anthologies is a Sumerian work that dates to 2000 B.C.E. These proverbs were written on clay tablets in cuneiform, the written language of Sumer, in what is now Iraq. Many of them sound quite familiar:

- He who gathers wealth must keep close watch on it.
- Wealth is hard to get, but poverty is easy.
- The poor are the silent ones of the land.

The book of Proverbs in the Bible is one of the most notable collections. It includes the following examples:

- Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.
- A soft answer turneth away wrath.
- A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.

Since the human experience is constant, despite differences in cultures and languages, the same proverb often occurs across several different traditions.

- Russian: A new broom sweeps clean.
- English: A bad broom leaves a dirty room.
- Ovambo (Africa): A new broom sweeps well.

Proverbs are also often used in fiction. Geoffrey Chaucer's work *The Canterbury Tales* (c. 1387–1400) and Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605) both hold many examples.

Benjamin Franklin used numerous proverbs in his *Poor Richard's Almanack,* published from 1733 to 1758. When Franklin was not able to find a suitable proverb, he would invent one. He authored the following examples:

- A penny saved is a penny earned.
- Early to bed, early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.

Today, proverbs remain as popular—and as useful—as ever.

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Ptah

(Egyptian)

Ptah was the great craftsman god of Egypt, who apportioned life to all living things. Ptah was described as the self-created fashioner of the world and of all life, including the other gods. He was associated with intellectual activities of thought and action.

Ptah's spouse usually was regarded as the lion goddess, Sekhmet. Among his offspring were said to be the goddess Hathor, the perfume god Nefertum, and Imhotep, the deified architect of the step pyramid at Djoser.

Images of Ptah usually show a man whose mummiform body was wrapped in a feathered garment. Only his hands protruded to grasp a certain kind of scepter, often in conjunction with other symbols. He wore a beard and a tight-fitting blue cap, occasionally surmounted by a solar disk, wavy ram horns, and two feathers. A tassel hung down from the back of his neck.

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Over time, Ptah's identity merged with that of Tatanen, the personification of the mound of earth that rose from Nun, the primeval waters. Ptah was also said to be the body of the creator god, as Re, the sun god, was this creator's face, and Amun his hidden identity.

Ptah allowed human craftsmen to translate thoughts into material things. He was referred to as "He Who Created the Arts" and as "Lord of Years." In the latter role, Ptah dispensed justice and destiny for the living. He was also frequently referred to as "Lord of Maat" (Lord of Truth). In some sources, Ptah ruled as the first earthly king of Egypt. As such, he was frequently called "King of the Two Lands," which referred to Upper and Lower Egypt.

The cult of Ptah was centered at Memphis, but he was worshipped throughout Egypt. The name of a temple of Ptah at Memphis, Hut-Ka-Ptah, or "Mansion of the Soul of Ptah," was probably the source of the Greek word *Aigyptos* and, ultimately, the English *Egypt*.

Noreen Doyle

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Puppetry and Storytelling

Puppetry has long been used as a means to tell stories for adults and children around the world. This medium has been used to convey social, political, and religious messages as well as for entertainment. It is likely that cavemen used their hands, the cave wall, and fire to create shadow puppets to tell the story of the day's hunt.

Types of Puppetry

There are four basic kinds of puppets: hand, rod, string, and shadow. Most puppets are combinations of these basic types.

A hand puppet is operated by putting a hand into the hollow puppet. A rod puppet has a stiff rod attached to it. String puppets are moved by pulling strings attached to their arms, legs, heads, and bodies. Shadow puppets are flat, intricately cut figures that usually are held between a sheet and a light to create a shadow.

Europe

In Europe, one of the most familiar puppet characters is Mr. Punch, which is short for Punchinello. The Punch and Judy show originated in England. Mr. Punch is always depicted as a hunchback with a large nose, usually dressed in jester costume.

Since the 1600s, Punch performers, called professors, have told the tales of Mr. Punch using a swazzle. This device is made of two strips of metal bound around a cotton tape reed that is placed in the puppeteer's mouth and produces a raspy sound, which creates Punch's unique voice.

The Punch and Judy stories traveled through Europe, each country making the tales its own. In Germany, Punch is called Kasper, and Judy is known as Grete; in the Netherlands, Punch is Jan Klaassen, and Judy is Katrijn; and, in Italy, Punch is Pulcinello, and his sometimes wife is Pulcinella. In Denmark, Punch is Mester Jackel; in France, he is Guignol; in Russia, he is Petruschka; and in Romania, he is Vasilache.

In Greece and Turkey, Punch is called Karagioz, and the performance is done with shadow puppets rather than with the traditional hand puppets of the British version. In Indonesia, Punch is known as Petruk.

Japan

While Punch and Judy were traversing the world, the puppetry form called *Bunraku* was developed in Japan. Also called *ningyo-joruri,* which literally means "puppets and storytelling," *Bunraku* came out of the *Kabuki* and *Karakuri* traditions.

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Shown are traditional Punch and Judy puppets, together with the puppeteer's booth and accessories. These all were made and operated by Gus Wood (1912–1962) and can be seen in the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. *(Victoria & Albert Museum, London/Art Resource, NY)*

The plays were clever retellings of classic Japanese folktales, along with new plays written by Chikamatu Monzaemon. Most of these stories revolved around the practice of respecting loyalty above all else, including personal feelings, and the tragedy that ensues from this attitude, as when Confucianism is followed blindly.

Indonesia

In Indonesia, there exist several unique forms of puppetry used for storytelling. *Wayang kulit* is performed with shadow puppets and tells Indonesian versions of the Indian Hindu epics. *Wayang golek* is performed with wooden rod puppets and retells the Hindu tales, as well as several Islamic Arabian adventure cycles. *Wayang klitik* is performed with flat wooden puppets and tells the history of the Javanese heroes of the Majapahit Empire. A single puppeteer, called the *dalang,* manipulates his set of as many as seventy rod puppets or between 100 and 500 shadow puppets during a *wayang* performance, which can be quite long.

The oldest form of wayang play is called the *wayang pura* cycle. This story cycle has motifs from pre-Hindu times that deal with plant cultivation, fertility, and death and features battles between gods and giants. Plays from this cycle might be performed at rice harvests to ritually cleanse the village.

A senior dalang might use the Murwakala play from this cycle during a daytime performance to exorcise evil from a village. The dalang is believed to have powers given to him by the gods, which allow him to tell these powerfully sacred stories and not die.

China

China also has a rich tradition of puppetry. String-puppet shows are the oldest recorded form of Chinese puppetry and are used to drive evil spirits away or to thank the gods. These performances, which often are regarded as rites in reverence of the gods, also tell the folktales of China.

Shadow puppets are used for more popular legends, folktales, and local history. Hand puppets, the newest form of puppetry, have been around for more than a thousand years. Most hand-puppet shows are retellings of popular historical Chinese novels. Puppetry in China is considered a performing art with universal appeal, rather than just entertainment for children.

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United States

In the United States, puppets generally are used for children's entertainment. They are used to teach and tell stories.

Fred Rogers of the *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* (1968–2001) television series used hand puppets to tell his stories in a land of make-believe. These stories, which were episodic, told tales of the various characters and taught children about how to handle different challenges, from dealing with bullies to mailing a letter.

The long-running children's television show *Sesame Street* (first aired in 1969) uses puppets to reflect the views of children and to help them deal with many issues, including birth, marriage, and death. Jim Henson, creator of the Muppets, used his puppets to tell many stories, both classic and original.

Puppetry is a thriving art form in the United States. Julie Taymor won a Tony Award for her direction and design of the Broadway musical *The Lion King* (1997), which incorporates puppets in the elaborate production. Paul Zaloom tells political stories with found-object puppets and retells classic tales using new types of puppets; Basil Twist puts new visual twists on old folktales; Bread and Puppet Theater, which is based in Vermont, presents political themes and old folktales through a mixture of pageantry and puppetry; and the Center for Puppetry Arts in Atlanta, Georgia, is devoted to storytelling through puppetry.

Young puppeteers continue to explore the possibilities of this ancient art form. Some use old, forgotten tales and others create new tales from current events.

See also: Wayang.

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Pushkin, Aleksandr Sergeyevich

(1799–1837)

Aleksandr Pushkin was a nineteenth-century Russian author who has been called his country's greatest poet and the founder of modern Russian literature. He is valuable to storytellers both for his original work and for his retellings of traditional Russian folktales.

Pushkin was born in Moscow to a poor but aristocratic family. In his childhood, as was traditional in such families, he was entrusted to nursemaids, tutors, and governesses. Since cultured Russian families of the nineteenth century spoke French, not Russian, he learned his native language from servants and from his nanny, who also told him *skazky,* or folktales. Pushkin was interested in poetry from an early age, and published his first poem when he was only fourteen years old.

Political Rebellion

While attending the Imperial Lyceum in Tsarskoe Selo, Pushkin began his first major work, a folktale in verse titled *Ruslan and Ludmila*. Pushkin took a post at the foreign office at Saint Petersburg in 1817, which is where he first became involved with antitsarist politics. *Ruslan and Ludmila* was published in 1820, the same year in which Pushkin was banished because of the political poems he had penned.

By 1823, Pushkin was living in Odessa. He later relocated to various other parts of Russia. But despite the upheaval in his life, Pushkin continued to write. In 1823, he started the novel *Eugene Onegin,* which was published in se-

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rial form between 1823 and 1831. Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky wrote an opera based on this work, which premiered in Moscow in 1879.

Pushkin's troubles with the authorities continued. In 1824, he was banished to his family estate of Mikhailovskoe. Pushkin's father tried in vain to keep his son under his control, but the young rebel was eventually exiled from the estate.

Meanwhile, Pushkin's more radical friends had run into deeper trouble. They took part in the Decembrist uprising in 1825 that attempted to overthrow Tsar Nicholas. Several of Pushkin's friends were exiled to Siberia or hanged.

In late spring of 1826, Pushkin sent the tsar a petition requesting release from exile. After an investigation showed that Pushkin had not been involved in the uprising, he was allowed to return to the capital, where he foreswore antigovernment activities.

Ill-fated Marriage

In 1829, Pushkin fell in love with sixteen-year-old Natalya Nikolayevna Goncharova, whom he married two years later. The marriage was not happy, as his wife was not trustworthy.

Still, this was a productive period for Pushkin. He wrote a group of plays while quarantined during a cholera epidemic in 1830. Among these plays were *The Avaricious Knight, Mozart and Salieri, The Stone Guest,* and *The Feast During the Plague.*

In 1831, the year of his marriage, Pushkin's great historical tragedy, *Boris Godunov,* was published. Based on the career of Boris Fyodorovich Godunov, the tsar of Russia from 1598 to 1605, the play was later turned into an opera by composer Modest Mussorgsky.

Pushkin also wrote many short stories in the period between 1830 and 1834. *The Queen of Spades,* completed in 1834, became Pushkin's most famous short story. Tchaikovsky based an opera on it.

Unfortunately, by 1834, Pushkin was deeply in debt. His wife was running up huge bills, attending all the balls at the royal palace and flirting with every man. Pushkin was worried about the bills, and more worried about whether his wife was faithful. Gossip spread that there was an affair between Natalya and the baron Georges d'Anthès. Pushkin was told that he had been elected to "The Serene Order of Cuckolds."

At last, Pushkin could stand it no longer. He challenged the baron to a duel to defend his wife's honor. It was his final mistake. In the duel, Pushkin was shot and mortally wounded. He died on February 10, 1837.

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Puss in Boots

(European)

This familiar tale of Puss in Boots is about a clever cat that helps a hapless human. Cats are often depicted in the world's folklore as supernaturally intelligent or cunning, and it is just a small step from the supernatural cat to the anthropomorphic Puss in Boots.

The tale type is found throughout Europe in different versions. Perhaps the most familiar version was written by the French poet and storyteller Charles Perrault.

Perrault's "Puss in Boots"

A miller with three sons died and left his youngest son only a cat. The young man was saddened to find that he was penniless. But the cat spoke and told the young man that if he provided him with a bag and a pair of boots, the cat would make their fortunes.

The cat pulled on the boots, slung the bag around his neck, and went off to a spot where there were many rabbits. The cat slipped some grain and grass into the bag and played dead. Sure enough, a rabbit jumped into the

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bag. Puss in Boots killed the rabbit and went to the royal palace, where he stood before the king. With a gracious bow, he told the king, “Sire, I have brought you a rabbit from my noble lord, the Master of Carabas.” The king graciously thanked him.

Next, the cat hid in a grain field and caught a brace of partridges. He presented these to the king in the same way. The cat continued to bring game to the king for some time.

Deceiving the King

Puss in Boots learned that the king planned to take a drive along the riverside with his daughter, the most beautiful princess in the world. The cat told his master to go bathe in the river, and to leave everything else to the cat. The young man agreed.

While the young man was bathing, the king’s carriage approached. The cat shouted, “Help! Help! The Lord Marquis of Carabas is going to drown!”

The king’s men “rescued” the young man, and the cat informed the king that, while his master was bathing, some rogues had stolen his clothes. The king promptly had a fine suit fetched for the marquis.

The young man and the princess immediately fell in love. The king, unaware of this, asked the marquis to join him in the royal coach.

The cat, delighted with how well his plan was going, ran ahead to where some farmers were mowing a meadow. He ordered the farmers to tell the king that the meadow belonged to the Lord Marquis of Carabas. The farmers complied. The same thing happened when the royal coach came upon some reapers and again with every worker the cat found along their route. By now, the king was amazed at the vastness of the Lord Marquis of Carabas’s estate.

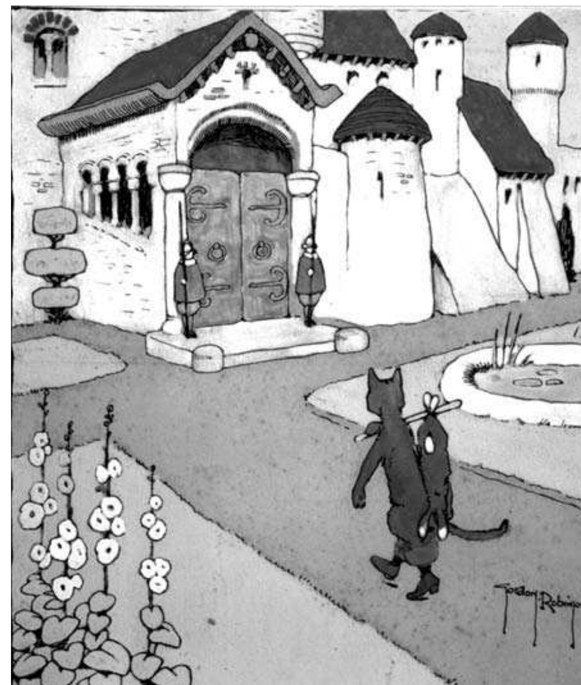
Puss and the Ogre

Puss in Boots arrived at a stately castle ruled by a wealthy ogre. The cat went to see the ogre and told him that he had heard about the ogre’s power to turn into any animal he wished. The ogre turned into a lion, which terrified the cat, then turned back into an ogre.

Puss in Boots admitted that he had been frightened. He challenged the ogre to turn into something small, which, he told the ogre, he was certain was impossible. The ogre, insulted, promptly turned into a mouse, and the cat ate him.

When the king arrived at the ogre’s castle, Puss in Boots ran out and announced, “Your Majesty is welcome to the castle of my Lord Marquis of Carabas.”

Now, the king was convinced the young man was rich and important, as indeed he had become. The young man and the princess were married, and the cat was made a great lord. Puss in Boots never again chased mice, except for fun.



Puss approaches a castle in this scene from the famous folktale “Puss in Boots.” The illustrator is Gordon Robinson, who was active in the early twentieth century. *(Victoria & Albert Museum, London/Art Resource, NY)*

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Versions of this story have been found in Germany, Italy, Norway, and Russia. As long as cats remain favorite household pets, it seems likely that this tale will continue to be popular as well.

See also: Tale Types.

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Quest for the Missing Husband

The quest by a wife or lover for a missing or stolen husband or fiancé is a world tale type.

A familiar motif in this tale is that of the monster or animal bridegroom. A husband is either completely transformed into a monster or animal or is able to shift his shape from human to monster or animal, usually as a result of a curse. The heroine either witnesses his human appearance during the shape-shifting or knows that there is a kind person under the ugly exterior.

Up until this point, the tale is parallel to the "Beauty and the Beast" tale type. But then a prohibition is broken, often by the wife trying to disenchant her husband, sometimes under the advice of another well-meaning but misguided relative.

In the "Cupid and Psyche" story, the wife is forbidden to see her husband's face but cannot resist the temptation. In many of the variations on the Scandinavian "White Bear" stories, the bearskin or other magical animal skin is thrown on the fire one day before the spell would have been broken. Once the prohibition is broken, the husband disappears. What follows in this tale type is the quest by the heroine to find and rescue him.

This quest usually takes the heroine through strange and difficult lands. In some cases, she must travel for seven years, or through seven kingdoms, or until she has worn down seven sets of iron-soled shoes, or some other such impossibly long stretch of time. Strangely, no real time passes as she searches, since she remains the same young woman throughout her quest. Sometimes, she has magical helpers, such as the Slavic Baba Yaga, or even demigods, such as Pan in the "Cupid and Psyche" tale.

Once the heroine reaches her lost husband's kingdom, the basic tale continues in one of two ways. In the simpler version, the husband has forgotten all about his wife and is about to marry another woman. When the heroine appears, he remembers her, and they are reunited. In the more complex version, the husband is under the thrall of an evil but usually beautiful witch who has enchanted him and plans to marry him.

The latter version continues with the heroine undergoing a test, such as sitting for three nights at the side of her sleeping husband and trying to wake him. Often, she gets this chance by bribing the witch with magical gifts given to her by the helpers she met along the way. In most versions, the magic of three is retained: She has no luck until the third night. Then either the heroine discovers that the witch placed an enchanted pin in the husband's hair to keep him asleep, or she weeps over him when he

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fails to wake. In both cases, he wakes and instantly remembers her.

The tale always ends with the spell broken and husband and wife happily reunited.

See also: Tale Types.

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Quests

A quest is a long and often difficult search for something. In story, quests are generally adventurous expeditions made by the protagonist.

The hero may have companions or may travel alone, but helpers or mentors are almost always met along the way. The quest may be for an object, to right a wrong, or for knowledge that will save the protagonist or the protagonist's people. In Sumerian and Babylonian myth, the hero Gilgamesh was questing for immortality. In the Arthurian tale of Perceval, the hero was seeking the Holy Grail.

The quest also may be part of a prophecy. In Greek mythology, for example, Jason's task was to gain the Golden Fleece to fulfill a prophecy and claim his crown.

In many folktales, the protagonist sets out to find his or her fortune. There may be a choice of gifts at the start of the quest, such as bread for the journey or a mother's blessing. The wise hero accepts the blessing.

In some tales, three brothers set out on a quest, either together or singly. In these tales, the eldest brothers fail, and the third, the youngest, succeeds. The Russian folktales about the hero Ivan often follow this plot. Ivan is the victorious son.

In some variants on this theme, such as *The Little Humpbacked Horse,* the two older brothers are villainous and are punished by the youngest brother. Similar tales end with the youngest brother forgiving his siblings' transgressions.

Sometimes, there are three sisters. Again, it is almost always the youngest of the three who triumphs. More rarely, such as in a variant found in *The Thousand and One Nights,* there may be two brothers and a younger sister, and it is the sister who saves her brothers.

During the quest, the protagonist often comes across a mentor. This wise man or woman often appears in the guise of a beggar. The protagonist shares food with this seemingly unfortunate individual and is rewarded with a magical object or important information.

The quest itself is always difficult and often dangerous. The Greek hero Odysseus traveled to the underworld to obtain information on his quest. Orpheus also visited the underworld to recover his lost bride. The Sumerian goddess Inanna traveled there and suffered a ritual death and revival to save her lover.

Often, in shamanistic tales, the shaman must travel to other realms or the realm of the dead to save a life or gain wisdom. Another danger may come from monsters that must be overcome, or ritual trials that must be passed.

In folktales in which the heroine quests for her lost husband, such as in the Norse tale "The White Bear," she travels a ritual seven days or seven years and wears out seven pairs of iron-heeled shoes hunting for him.

See also: Archetype.

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Railroad Folklore

(American)

Something about railroads seems to inspire larger-than-life stories. Some of these stories are true, some are pure folklore, and still others are based on fact but take on a life of their own.

Teenage Heroine

An example of a true railroad story that has not been overly embellished by folklore is that of a teenager from Iowa, Kate Shelley. On a night in 1881, a fierce storm broke over the Des Moines River valley. Around 11 P.M., a type of train known as a pusher was sent out to check for track washouts. The storm-weakened bridge over Honey Creek collapsed under the train's weight.

Fifteen-year-old Kate ran out to see what had happened, and she found the men trapped in the water. There was nothing she could do to help them, and the midnight express train would soon be coming down the same track. The result would be a terrible crash if Kate failed to warn the agent at the nearest station, at Moingona, about the washout.

The only way to get to the station was over a narrow catwalk that crossed the flooded river. In the darkness, Kate crawled on hands and knees, pelted by rain and nearly thrown off the catwalk by the wind. But she made it. She raced to the Moingona station and told the station agent of the washout.

The station agent ran out into the storm with a red lamp just in time to halt the oncoming train. Kate led a rescue team to where the two men from the pusher train were still clinging to the wreckage, and they were saved.

Casey Jones

The true story of Casey Jones has been exaggerated over time. The basic story is of a train wreck that happened on the night of April 29, 1900.

Engineer Casey Jones was heading out from Memphis, Tennessee, with Engine 382 and six cars, southbound for Canton. The scheduled departure time was 11:15 P.M. Records indicate that Jones left at 12:50; an hour and thirty-five minutes late. Casey was determined to make up the lost time and arrive on schedule.

Unfortunately, there were trains ahead, one of which had stalled. This meant that Engine 382, going at full speed, was unable to stop in time and crashed right into the back of the stalled train. Casey Jones was fatally injured. Later, a formal investigation blamed him for the accident, saying that he had not properly responded to the warning flag signals.

A local railroad worker, Wallace Skinner, is credited with writing a song about the accident.

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It was overheard and turned into a song performed at vaudeville shows. The ballad made Casey Jones a folk hero:

Come all you rounders if you want to hear
A story 'bout a brave engineer,
Casey Jones was the rounder's name
'Twas on the Illinois Central that he won his fame.

Casey Jones, he loved a locomotive.
Casey Jones, a mighty man was he.
Casey Jones run his final locomotive
With the Cannonball Special on the old I.C.

Casey pulled into Memphis on Number Four,
The engine foreman met him at the roundhouse door;
Said, "Joe Lewis won't be able to make his run
So you'll have to double out on Number One."

If I can have Sim Webb, my fireman, my engine 382,
Although I'm tired and weary, I'll take her through.
Put on my whistle that come in today
'Cause I mean to keep her wailing as we ride and pray.

Casey Jones, mounted the cabin,
Casey Jones, with the orders in his hand.
Casey Jones, he mounted the cabin,
Started on his farewell journey to the promised land.

They pulled out of Memphis nearly two hours late,
Soon they were speeding at a terrible rate.
And the people knew by the whistle's moan.
That the man at the throttle was Casey Jones.

Need more coal there, fireman Sim,
Open that door and heave it in.
Give that shovel all you got
And we'll reach Canton on the dot.

On April 30, 1900, that rainy morn,
Down in Mississippi near the town of Vaughan,
Sped the Cannonball Special only two minutes late
Traveling 70 miles an hour when they saw a freight.

The caboose number 83 was on the main line,
Casey's last words were "Jump, Sim, while you have the time."
At 3:52 that morning came the fateful end,
Casey took his farewell trip to the promised land.

Casey Jones, he died at the throttle,
With the whistle in his hand.
Casey Jones, he died at the throttle,
But we'll all see Casey in the promised land.

His wife and three children were left to mourn
The tragic death of Casey on that April morn.
May God through His goodness keep them by His grace
Till they all meet together in that heavenly place.

Casey's body lies buried in Jackson, Tennessee
Close beside the tracks of the old I.C.
May his spirit live forever throughout the land
As the greatest of all heroes of a railroad man.

Casey Jones, he died at the throttle,
Casey Jones, with the whistle in his hand.
Casey Jones, he died at the throttle,
But we'll all see Casey in the promised land.

(The Ballad of Casey Jones)

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Other Railroad Tales

A number of railroad stories are based on the vanishing hitchhiker folktale type. One version has a beautiful ghost woman who appears from time to time on the tracks or in the engineer's cab. Sometimes, she kisses the lucky fellow. Sometimes, she merely vanishes, leaving the scent of roses behind her.

Another version tells of a phantom wreck that a passing driver tries in vain to report. The wreck vanishes, and the witness discovers that it was the ghost of a wreck that happened years back. These tales cannot be pinned down to any one railroad, time, or place.

The final type of railroad folklore is jokelore (jokes that qualify as folklore). A famous example that has been quoted many times in many versions is about a railroad switchman who is on the witness stand describing a head-on collision he had witnessed. One of the lawyers asked the switchman what had gone through his mind as he saw the two trains coming together. "This is one helluva way to run a railroad!" he replied.

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Rakshasas

(Hindu)

In Hindu mythology and folklore, the *rakshasas* were a dangerous race of human-hating demons. The word *rakshasas* means "destroyers."

There is some disagreement about the origin of the rakshasas. The god Brahma may have created the rakshasas, or they may have been the children of Nirriti, goddess of death. Their chief was called Ravana.

Rakshasas were shape-shifters, able to take human or animal form, and some were known to take the shape of beautiful women to lure human men to their doom. In their demon shape, the rakshasas could be blue-skinned, yellow-skinned, green-skinned, or occasionally other colors. They had matted hair, big bellies, and slits for eyes. Some were said to have five feet.

Humans had good reason to fear these demons. Rakshasas loved to kill and eat people, and they thought nothing of disturbing sacred ceremonies to get their prey. They were able to possess a human or reanimate a corpse.

Fortunately, the rakshasas were stupid. A human could escape the rakshasas simply by addressing them as kinsmen. They would become confused, thinking the human had suddenly become one of them, and let the human get away.

See also: *Retelling: The Ramayana.*

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Ramakian

(Thai)

The *Ramakian* is a Thai epic that is based on the Indian *Ramayana,* although there are specific differences between the two epics in setting and culture. One of the major differences is that the *Ramayana* is a Hindu epic, while the *Ramakian* has been strongly influenced by Thailand's Buddhist background. Like the *Ramayana,* this epic tale is retold in many ways, through drama, dance, puppetry, and shadow theater.

The basic story of the *Ramakian* is similar to the *Ramayana*. The hero, Rama, and his

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wife and love, Sita, are exiled, she is captured and rescued, and the couple is helped by Hanuman, the monkey god.

The character of Rama is a divine figure in the *Ramayana,* an avatar of the Hindu deity Vishnu; in the *Ramakian,* he is a Thai prince who was Buddha in a previous life. In the *Ramayana,* the demon-king Ravana is utterly evil. His counterpart in the *Ramakien,* Tosakanth, is a more sympathetic character. He is truly in love with Sita, and it is that gentle emotion, rather than the vicious hatred that motivates Ravana, that leads Tosakanth to do harm.

Scholars are not certain how or precisely when the Thai people learned of the *Ramayana*. What is known is that Indian influences began to extend into Thailand and the rest of Southeast Asia in the first centuries C.E.

By the eighteenth century, there were several versions of the *Ramakian* within Thailand. Perhaps the most popular version was written by the eighteenth-century King Rama I. A second version was written by his son, Rama II, for use in the Khon drama, the traditional Thai classical dance. The *Ramakian* remains so popular in Thailand that people still name their children after its characters.

See also: Epics; *Retelling: The Ramayana*.

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Ravens and Crows

For thousands of years and throughout the world, ravens and crows have been featured in mythology and folklore. Both ravens and crows are members of the Corvidae family of birds, and these intelligent birds are dramatic in appearance, with glossy black feathers and no other touches of color. In Western Europe and parts of the United States, there are superstitions that claim they are birds of ill omen, while in the Pacific Northwest and parts of Siberia the raven is seen as a deity.

Mythology

Greek and Norse mythology both feature ravens. Coronis was a mortal woman who was impregnated by the god Apollo. Apollo left a white raven to watch over her, but just before the birth, Coronis married a mortal man, Ischys. The crow informed Apollo of this, and Apollo killed Coronis and Ischys. He then turned the crow black for being the bearer of bad news.

Odin, the head of the Norse pantheon, had two ravens, Huginn and Muninn, whose names mean “thought” and “memory,” respectively. Odin sent the two birds off around the world each morning at daybreak to bring him news from the various realms of existence.

In Aborigine mythology, Raven tried to steal fire from seven sisters called the Pleides. He failed and ended up with charred black feathers.

Indigenous Cultural Beliefs

Indigenous peoples from many lands have traditional beliefs about ravens. The Saami people of Lapland say that the raven has a feather called *laevedolge,* which leads it to food and provides knowledge about the habits of wolves so the raven can scavenge wolf kills. The folklore adds that if anyone finds a dying raven, it must be plucked and the feathers must be placed in a slow-flowing stream. The feather that goes against the stream is the laevedolge, and, if it is securely kept for three days and nights, it will act as a guide for the one who found it.

The Finnish tradition, which clearly has roots in the Saami belief, is that the raven may be a bird of ill omen, but below its wing is a feather of fortune. If a trapper can find this feather, he is rewarded with a bountiful catch.

Raven is a major trickster deity in the indigenous cultures of the Pacific Northwest

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region of the United States. He is often seen as a creator, sometimes forming the earth deliberately and other times accidentally. The various cultures have different names for this being: Dotson Sa means Great Raven, Nankilstlas is He Whose Voice Must Be Obeyed, and Nascakiyetl is Raven-at-the-Head-of-[the] Nass [river].

Great Britain

It has been said that if the ravens ever leave the Tower of London, it will fall and so shall the Crown of England. For this reason, ravens are kept at the tower at all times, cared for by the raven master.

In Irish Celtic mythology, the war goddess, the Morrigan, could turn herself into a raven so that she could fly over the battlefield to get a better view. In the druidic tradition, the raven was believed to be an oracular bird, bringing the druids knowledge from the otherworld.

There also are many superstitions about ravens and crows, the majority of which hail from Great Britain:

- Finding a dead crow on the road was good luck.
- Crows in a churchyard were bad luck.
- A single crow over a house meant bad news and often foretold a death within.
- Often, two crows would be released simultaneously during a wedding celebration. If the two flew away together, the couple could look forward to sharing a long life. If the crows separated, the couple might grow apart.
- In Wales, it was unlucky to have a crow cross your path. But if two crows crossed your path, the luck was reversed. And if a raven perched on a house, it meant prosperity for the family within.
- In Somerset, England, locals used to carry an onion for protection from crows. In the same area, locals used to tip their hats to ravens, in order not to offend them.
- In Yorkshire, children were threatened with the Great Black Bird, which would carry them off if they misbehaved.
- A gathering of crows was sometimes called a murder, which probably stems from a folk belief that crows would sit in judgment of their own and then kill a criminal crow.

Other Cultures

In Kenyan folk belief, there are dwarves who live on Mount Kilimanjaro who make sacrifices to their ancestors. It is believed that bits of meat left from these offerings become ravens.

In India, Brahma appears as a raven in one of his incarnations. Also, ravens are sacred to Shiva and Kali.

In Chinese mythology, a three-legged raven lives in the Sun, representing the Sun's three phases: rising, noon, and setting. The Japanese goddess Amaterasu is sometimes represented as a giant raven, Yata-Garasu.

As long as people remain intrigued by crows and ravens, it seems likely that folk beliefs surrounding the birds will continue. These beliefs provide a rich source of material for the storyteller.

Modern Studies

Ravens have proven themselves to be clever birds. Scientists have seen them solve all manner of puzzles. Crows, too, have been proven to be clever, with an ability to count at least up to four.

See also: Odin/Odhinn; Tricksters; *Retelling: Raven Steals the Sun.*

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Re/Ra/Pre/ Re-Harakhety

(Egyptian)

Re was the ancient Egyptian sun god.

Re was self-created from the primordial earth, and then went on to create air (Shu) and moisture (Tefnut). In his continual cycle of rising and setting, Re symbolized the act of creation.

As creator, Re was ruler of the gods, and, as the first mythic king of Egypt, he was closely associated with the monarchy. When Horus and Seth battled for the crown, Re judged between them.

Beginning with the reign of Djedefre during the fourth dynasty (c. 2584–2576 B.C.E.), Egyptian kings took the title Son of Re. Upon his death, a king united with the Sun, a privilege that was later extended to all people who were worthy.

Re had no spouse but was closely associated with the goddesses who embodied the powers of his divine eye, such as Hathor, Tefnut, Sekhmet, and Maat, the personification of truth and order. Although Re was self-created, the goddess Neith was sometimes said to be his mother.

In literature, Re was often described as an old man. The hymn called the "Litany of Re" listed his seventy-four forms. Re was usually portrayed as a falcon-headed man or mummy or as the evening Sun with the head of a ram. In each case, he wore a solar disk as a crown.

The sun god Re sits in his solar barque, watching the daily killing of the serpent Aphophis, which represents the triumph of the returning Sun over darkness. This image is from the coffin of Nespawershepi, chief scribe of the Temple of Amun, and dates to c. 984 B.C.E. *(© Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY)*

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The Egyptians visualized the Sun's journey across the sky in a variety of ways. Perhaps the sky goddess, Nut, gave birth to the Sun in the morning and swallowed or embraced it in the evening.

Another explanation was that the god Nun lifted above the eastern horizon a boat that held the solar scarab with the ball of the Sun. During each twelve-hour day, Re and his entourage traveled from east to west in the boat, known as the *mandjet*-barque. In the sixth through eighth hours, Re and his crew had to defeat the monstrous serpent Apep. At sunset, they boarded the *mesktet*-barque, a special boat designed to traverse the *duat,* a region within the body of Nut or below the earth. In the duat, the Sun was believed to awaken the dead. Jackals towed the night-boat from west to east, where, again, Apep had to be defeated. Re and his crew emerged triumphant each dawn.

The Greeks knew Re as Helios.

Noreen Doyle

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Reincarnation

Many religions and folk beliefs feature the idea that a dead soul returns to life in a new body. Storytellers may or may not wish to touch upon the religious aspects of reincarnation, but there are some intriguing tale types to explore that utilize the theme.

In Australian Aboriginal belief, human souls were originally spirits of the ancestral beings of the mythic Dreamtime. After the spirit lived out its human life, it would return to the spirit realm, but might choose to be reborn as human again.

In some African cultures, including the Zulu of South Africa, a soul may pass through several incarnations, from insect to animal to human and back again in a never-ending progression. In West Africa, the Yoruba believe that people are direct reincarnations of their ancestors.

In Hinduism and Buddhism, there is a shared belief in karma and the wheel of birth, in which each future incarnation depends on the life lived in this one. The universe also is believed to pass through several deaths and rebirths.

In pagan Norse belief, the final battle, Ragnarok, would bring about the death of the universe. But a rebirth would follow.

A tale of reincarnation that is particularly intriguing is the Japanese story of O-tei, a young woman who was engaged to be married to the man she loved but fell mortally ill. On her deathbed, she promised to return to her love in a healthy body. When O-tei died, the man wandered Japan, unable to find true happiness. One day, he found a girl who looked strangely familiar. She cried out that she was O-tei and fainted. When she recovered, she did not recall saying that she was O-tei. The two were married anyway and lived happily ever after.

Modern musicals such as *On a Clear Day* (1965) and several movies, most recently *Birth* (2004), and even television programs have dealt with the subject of reincarnation. It remains a popular theme in folk culture around the world. The appeal of this theme is the sense of comfort derived from believing that we will not have to leave this world forever after death.

See also: Phoenix.

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Reynard the Fox

Reynard the Fox is a fox in the role of a tricky peasant. He is featured in several satirical medieval beast epics that were popular throughout Western Europe around the middle of the twelfth century C.E.

Beginnings

Tales of Reynard can be found in Latin, French, Dutch, German, and English. The stories were widely spread by minstrels.

The earliest written major appearance of the character was in an Old French work, *Le roman de Renar* (*The Story of Reynard*), which dates to about 1175 C.E. This basic tale involves the summoning of Reynard by King Noble Leo the Lion to answer accusations made by Isengrim the Wolf. Other accusers in the loosely connected sections of this work include Bruin the Bear, Baldwin the Ass, and Tibert or Tybalt the Cat. However, Reynard is tricky enough to disprove each and every claim made against him. There is even a pseudo-funeral for Reynard, in which the other animals, his enemies, make false laments, which are cut short by his return from the dead.

The next literary appearance of Reynard is in a medieval mock epic in Latin, *Ysengrimus,* from about 1200 C.E. This work contained several tales of Reynard.

English author Geoffrey Chaucer used some of the Reynard material in his work *The Canterbury Tales* (c. 1387–1400), specifically in the "Nonne's Preeste's Tale." William Caxton, the English publisher and printer, quickly saw the commercial worth of the stories, and translated a Flemish version, which he published as *Historie of Reynart the Foxe* in the 1480s.

Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Reynard continued to be popular through the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. German author and poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe published *Reinecke Fuchs* (*Reynard the Fox*) in the 1820s. A modern English version by Englishman T.J. Arnold appeared in 1860. A version from Luxembourg, also titled *Reinecke Fuchs,* was published in 1872 by Michel Rodange.

American author William Rose published a Reynard story called *Epic of the Beast* in 1924. In 1972, the government of Luxembourg issued a stamp honoring Reynard the Fox. A French animated series, *Moi, Renart* (*I, Reynard*), aired in 1985.

In England, a fox still may be called Reynard. It also is referred to by that name in traditional English hunting ballads, as in the following anonymous work:

On the first day of Spring in the year
ninety-three
The first recreation was in this country,
The King's County gentleman o'er hills,
dales and rocks,
They rode out so jovially in search
of a fox.

Tally-ho, hark away, tally-ho, hark away,
tally ho, hark away, boys, away.

When Reynard first started he faced
Tullamore,
Arklow and Wicklow along the seashore,
He kept his brush in view every yard
of the way,
And it's straight he took his course through
the streets of Roscrea.

Tally-ho, hark away, tally-ho, hark away,
tally ho, hark away, boys, away.

But Reynard, sly Reynard, he lay hid
that night,
They swore they would watch him until
the daylight,
Early the next morning the woods they
did resound,
With the echo of horns and the sweet
cry of hounds.

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Tally-ho, hark away, tally-ho, hark away,
tally ho, hark away, boys, away.

When Reynard was started he faced
to the hollow,
Where none but the hounds and footmen
could follow,
The gentlemen cried: "Watch him, watch
him, what shall we do?
If he makes it to the rocks then he will
cross Killatoe!"

Tally-ho, hark away, tally-ho, hark away,
tally ho, hark away, boys, away.

But Reynard, sly Reynard, away he did run,
Away from the huntsman, away from the gun,
The gentleman cried: "Home, boys, there's
nothing we can do,
For Reynard is away and our hunting
is through."

Tally-ho, hark away, tally-ho, hark away,
tally ho, hark away, boys, away.

The fox figure in world folklore always is portrayed as cunning and sly, whether it is a Japanese fox maiden out to lure herself a human lover, or a fox tricking a wolf or bear, as in many Native American folktales.

See also: Tricksters.

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Rhiannon

(Welsh)

Rhiannon is featured in the first and third branches of the Welsh medieval collection of tales the *Mabinogion*. The Welsh name Rhiannon is derived from an earlier Gaulish form, Rigantona, or Great Queen.

Rhiannon is the daughter of Hyfaidd Hen, the wife of Pwyll, Lord of Dyfed, mother of Pryderi, and subsequently the wife of Manawydan. Rhiannon has close associations with horses in the *Mabinogion,* where she first appears riding on an uncatchable, shimmering, otherworldly horse.

Rhiannon and Pwyll

In the first branch of the *Mabinogion,* Pwyll was waiting on the mound of Arberth for a marvel—something unusual or wondrous—to happen. He saw a beautiful woman ride by on a white, shimmering horse and sent his men to find out who she was. No matter how fast they rode, they could not catch up to the mysterious woman, though she never appeared to go faster than at a steady gait.

These events were repeated on the next day, and even the fastest rider on the fastest horse could not catch up to her. On the third day, Pwyll attempted to catch the beautiful woman, but to no avail. Finally, out of desperation, he called out "Lady, for the sake of the man you love, wait for me!"

"I will wait happily," she replied, "and it would have been better for the horse had you asked that earlier."

The beautiful woman revealed that her name was Rhiannon. She had sought out Pwyll and had loved him from afar for a long time. She told Pwyll that she desired to wed him rather than the man that her father, Hyfaidd Hen, had chosen. Rhiannon and Pwyll arranged to meet again and wed in a year.

When the wedding day arrived, a stranger came to the hall begging for a boon, or favor. Pwyll foolishly agreed to grant the stranger's request before knowing what it was. He was dismayed to learn that the stranger was Gwawl, Rhiannon's other suitor. Gwawl demanded that Rhiannon marry him. Rhiannon asked that Gwawl return in a year, at which time, a second feast would be ready.

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One year later, the feast was prepared. Pwyll's men hid in the orchard, and Pwyll went to the feast dressed as a ragged beggar. He carried a bag that he asked Gwawl to fill with food. Gwawl agreed. Pwyll told him that the bag would never be filled unless a nobleman, replete with land and wealth, stepped into the bag, saying, "Enough has been put in here." Gwawl did this, but as soon as he stepped into the bag, Pwyll drew the strings up around him and captured him in the bag.

Once released, Gwawl promised never to take revenge. Rhiannon and Pwyll were finally wed. They had a son, Pryderi, whose story completes the first branch of the *Mabinogion*.

Pryderi's Tale

The newborn Pryderi disappeared while in the care of Rhiannon's ladies-in-waiting. Fearing punishment of death, they framed Rhiannon for the murder of her son, smearing animal blood on her as she slept.

On hearing the news, Pwyll punished Rhiannon by sentencing her to sit every day for seven years near a horse-block outside the gates of Arberth. She was to carry any willing guest on her back through the gates.

But Pryderi had not been killed. King Teyrnon had found the baby outside his stables. He and his wife had raised Pryderi as their own. Once he was grown, Pryderi's adoptive parents learned his true identity and returned him to Pwyll and Rhiannon.

Later References

In the second branch of the *Mabinogion,* Rhiannon is mentioned in the myth of Branwen, the daughter of Llyr and sister to Manawydan, Rhiannon's second husband. The story mentions the singing of three birds in Harlech whose song was sweeter than any other. These birds were called "The Singing Birds of Rhiannon."

The birds are also featured in a version of the tale of Culwch and Olwen. The giant Ysbaddaden demanded that the birds be brought to him by the hero Culwch. This was one of the tasks that the young man was forced to complete in order to wed Ysbaddaden's daughter, Olwen.

No other tales of Rhiannon have survived.

Lisa Spangenberg

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Ring Cycle, The

Richard Wagner's four-opera fantasy, *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (*The Ring of the Nibelung*) is commonly referred to as "The Ring Cycle." It is based on Norse and German mythology and the German epic the *Nibelungenlied* (*Song of the Niebelungs*), and it is full of world mythic themes.

The four operas are *Das Rheingold* (*The Rhinegold*; 1869), *Die Walkure* (*The Valkyrie*; 1870), *Siegfried* (1876), *and Gotterdammerung* (*Twilight of the Gods*; 1876).

Das Rheingold (The Reingold)

The story begins with three water nymphs, the Rhinemaidens, swimming in the Rhine River. They teased Alberich the Nibelung, a dwarf that lived far underground, as he tried in vain to catch them.

Suddenly, a ray of sunlight shone on a pile of gold—the magical Rhinegold the Rhinemaidens were supposed to be guarding. They told Alberich that if someone should forswear all love, he would be able to forge an all-powerful ring out of the Rhinegold. Raging, Alberich cursed all love, stole the Rhinegold, and fled back to the depths.

Meanwhile, Wotan, leader of the gods, had hired the giant brothers Fasolt and Fafnir to build him a mighty palace. Following the advice of the trickster fire god, Loge, Wotan had promised the giants that he would give

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them the goddess Freya, who kept the golden apples of immortality for the gods as payment. When the giants finished the work and tried to claim their reward, Wotan stalled them until Loge appeared. Loge told everyone about Alberich and the stolen Rhinegold and convinced the giants to agree to take the treasure in place of Freya.

At the same time, in the dwarf kingdom of Nibelheim, Alberich had forced his brother Mime to forge the Tarnhelm, a magic helmet that let its wearer become invisible or change shape. Wotan and Loge stole the Tarnhelm and carried off Alberich. Wotan demanded a ransom from Alberich of all the Rhinegold and the ring. Furious, Alberich placed a powerful curse on the ring: Whoever had the ring would be doomed.

Wotan initially ignored this threat. But Erda, Mother Earth, warned Wotan that she had seen a dark day dawn for the gods. So Wotan gave up the ring, along with the rest of the treasure, to the giants. The curse instantly began to work. The giants fought over the treasure, and Fafnir killed his brother.

Die Walkure (The Valkyrie)

The story begins with a terrible thunderstorm. An exhausted, unarmed man, Siegmund, took refuge in the first house he came upon, which had a live tree as a center support. The woman of the house, Sieglinde, tended to him but told him that she and the house belonged to Hunding. Siegmund said bitterly that bad luck haunted him, and that he planned to flee this sanctuary before he could bring bad luck there as well. Sieglinde retorted that Siegmund could not bring bad luck to a place where it already resided.

Hunding returned and wanted to hear his visitor's story. Siegmund told him that his father was a mysterious warrior named Wulf (Wolf) and that he had a twin sister. Siegmund had returned home one day to find his mother slain, his father and sister gone, and their house destroyed. Wandering, hunting in vain for them, Siegmund tried to protect a young woman who was being forced into a marriage. In the struggle, Siegmund had killed some of her kin and saw the young woman die. His sword and spirit broken, Siegmund had fled and ended up at Hunding's house.

Hunding cried out that he had been called upon to avenge a murderer—and it was Siegmund. But the laws of hospitality forced Hunding to give a day of sanctuary to his guest. Hunding announced that they would fight to the death in the morning and went to bed. Sieglinde gave Hunding a sleeping potion to make sure he would remain asleep and returned to Siegmund.

Siegmund told Sieglinde that his father had sworn he would have a sword when he most needed one. Sieglinde explained that she had been forced to marry Hunding and that a strange thing had happened at their wedding feast. A stranger whose face was covered by his large hat had thrust a sword deep into the tree that was central to Hunding's house and said that it would belong to whoever could pull it from the trunk. Sieglinde was certain that Siegmund was that hero.

Siegmund drew the sword from the tree and named it Nothung (Needy). He and Sieglinde recognized the intense love between them, even when they discovered that she was his long-lost twin sister.

Wotan, who was the father of the twins, was the mysterious stranger who had thrust the sword into the tree. He ordered his Valkyrie daughter Brunhilde to protect Siegmund in the coming fight. Wotan's wife was Fricka, protector of wedlock, and she was furious that Wotan has sired children with another woman and that he was protecting the incestuous twins. If the gods broke their own laws they would lose their powers, so Wotan reluctantly agreed to withdraw all support from Siegmund.

But Wotan confessed his concerns to Brunhilde. If Alberich ever regained the magic ring made of the Rhinegold, he could turn Wotan's heroes against him and conquer everything. Fafnir, once a giant, now a dragon, guarded the ring, but Wotan's own treaties prevented him from attacking Fafnir

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directly. That was why he engendered Siegmund, hoping to create a free hero. As his son, however, Siegmund was hardly free. Wotan had no idea what to do. He ordered Brunhilde to protect Hunding instead of Siegmund.

Brunhilde pitied Siegmund. She disobeyed her father and tried to shield Siegmund. Wotan, though, shattered Nothung and Siegmund was slain. Brunhilde fled with Sieglinde on horseback. She gave the woman the shards of Nothung and explained to Sieglinde that she was pregnant with a great hero, who would be named Siegfried.

Sieglinde fled as the furious Wotan arrived. He stripped Brunhilde of her godhood and put her into an enchanted sleep. She would stay in that state until a hero wakened her. Wotan then had Loge surround Brunhilde with a ring of flame that none but the bravest would dare to penetrate.

Siegfried

Siegfried's story begins in a cave in the deep forest, where Mime, a dwarf smith, was forging a sword and fuming because no matter how good a blade he forged, his young "foster son" Siegfried broke it. There was only one sword that Siegfried would not be able to break: Nothung, the enchanted sword. But Nothung was in shards and Mime could not forge it anew no matter how hard he tried. He muttered to himself that the only reason he had taken all this pain with Siegfried was because he wanted to use the young man to slay the dragon Fafnir. The dragon guarded the ring forged from the Rhinegold.

Siegfried demanded to be told who his real parents were. Mime finally admitted that he had found Siegfried's mother as she was dying after giving birth. He showed Siegfried the shards of Nothung. Siegfried, delighted to learn he was not related to the dwarf, told Mime to reforge Nothung, and went out into the forest.

As Mime sat worrying, he was startled by the sudden appearance of Wotan, who was in disguise and called himself Wanderer. He challenged Mime to a riddle game. They were each to ask three riddles, and the other must answer all three correctly or lose his head.

Mime asked three simple riddles. After answering Mime's riddles, Wanderer coldly told him that he should have asked things he really wished to know, rather than wasting his chances.

Wanderer then asked his riddles. Mime answered the first two riddles but was stumped by the third, which was "Who will reforge Nothung?" Wanderer refused to take Mime's head, saying that task would go to the one who had never known fear.

Once Mime realized in horror that Wanderer was Wotan, he knew that he could only have meant that Siegfried would kill him. Siegfried had grown up half wild and knew nothing of fear. When Siegfried returned, Mime told the youngster that he had promised Siegfried's mother to teach the boy the meaning of fear, so they had to go and visit Fafnir. Siegfried easily reforged Nothung, and Mime prepared a potion for Siegfried and led him to Fafnir's lair.

Siegfried fearlessly summoned Fafnir, telling the dragon that he merely wanted to learn the meaning of fear. Fafnir attacked, and Siegfried killed him.

Some of the dragon's blood spilled onto Siegfried's fingers. It burned, and so Siegfried licked his fingers. As he tasted the blood, he could suddenly understand the speech of birds. A bird told Siegfried to take the ring and the Tarnhelm, the helmet of invisibility. The bird warned him of Mime's plan to murder him. When Mime offered Siegfried the drugged potion, Siegfried killed him.

Now that he was alone, Siegfried asked the bird if it knew where he could find a suitable companion. The bird told him about Brunhilde, the young woman who was once a Valkyrie but now lay in deep sleep atop a mountain, surrounded by a magic fire that could be penetrated only by one who knew no fear. Siegfried set off to find Brunhilde.

Siegfried met Wotan at the base of the mountain and challenged him. The angry

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Wotan blocked Siegfried's path with his Runespear and told him to flee before he shattered Nothung—again. Now Siegfried knew that he had met the one responsible for his father's death. A single blow from Nothung broke the Runespear in two. Wotan, all power gone, was made to flee.

Siegfried climbed the mountain and went through the enchanted fire. He found Brunhilde lying there. Since she was in full armor and he had never seen a woman before, he at first thought she was a man.

As Siegfried removed Brunhilde's armor he recoiled, realizing that this definitely was not a man. For the first time in his life, he experienced fear. Unsure how to waken her, Siegfried kissed Brunhilde. By this kiss, Brunhilde was awakened. Overcome by the suddenness of love, they fell into each other's arms.

Gotterdammerung (Twilight of the Gods)

The story begins with the Three Norns, the Fates, spinning the rope of fate. They talked about things that are, have been, and will be.

They spoke of how Wotan lost his eye drinking from the Spring of Wisdom and carved his Runespear from a branch of the World-Tree Ash. The spring had dried up, the Ash had died, and Wotan's Runespear had been shattered. Wotan ordered the dead Ash to be cut down and the wood piled around Valhalla as a great pyre, which would one day be ignited by Loge, god of fire.

As the Norns discussed Alberich and his curse, the rope of fate snapped and was broken. The wisdom of the Norns was at an end, and the Norns hurried to their mother, Erda.

Meanwhile, a new day dawned around the Valkyrie Rock, where Siegfried and Brunhilde rested. Siegfried wanted to go wandering in search of new heroic deeds. Brunhilde gave him her horse, Grane, to ride, and Siegfried gave the ring—the fateful cursed ring forged by Alberich—to Brunhilde as a token of his faith before riding off.

In the human realm, in the hall of the Gibichungs, Lord Gunther asked his clever half brother Hagen (whose father was Alberich) how he could win more fame and glory. Hagen told Gunther that he should marry, and that only one wife would be noble enough for him—Brunhilde.

Gunther lacked the courage to break through the ring of fire. Hagen agreed, saying the one with such courage was Siegfried. He went on to say that Gunther's sister, Gutrune, should marry Siegfried. Gutrune thought Hagen was jesting. How could she charm the bravest hero in the world? Hagen reminded her of a magic potion that would make Siegfried lose his memory and fall in love with the first woman he saw.

Siegfried arrived at the castle. He wanted Gunther to either fight with him or become his friend. Gunther, afraid, asked that they become friends.

Hagen asked if it was true that Siegfried really was the owner of the Nibelung treasure hoard. When Siegfried said yes, Hagen wanted to know if he had taken anything from the hoard. Siegfried showed Hagen the Tarnhelm, which Hagen immediately identified. He told Siegfried of its powers. The Tarnhelm allowed its wearer to change shape at will and to travel from one place to another at the speed of a thought. Siegfried also mentioned the ring and said that "a most marvelous lady" was keeping it safe.

Just then, Gutrune appeared and gave a welcoming toast to Siegfried. She offered Siegfried the magic potion that would make him lose his memory and fall madly in love with her. Once under the spell, Siegfried devised an ingenious plan: He would use the magic of the Tarnhelm to disguise himself as Gunther and would win Brunhilde for Gunther if Gunther would allow him to marry Gutrune. Hagen made Gunther and Siegfried swear an oath of blood brotherhood. Secretly, he was interested only in the ring.

Meanwhile, Brunhilde's Valkyrie sister Waltraute visited her. She told Brunhilde that Wotan claimed that the gods and the whole

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world would be freed from the ring's curse only if Brunhilde would give it back to the Rhinemaidens. Brunhilde refused to give up Siegfried's gift. She was sure that Siegfried would return.

A figure emerged from the fire surrounding Brunhilde. It was Gunther—actually Siegfried in Gunther's guise. He imitated Gunther's voice, informed Brunhilde that she was now Gunther's wife, and took the ring from her finger. Using the Tarnhelm's power of teleportation, Siegfried returned to Gutrune.

Gunther brought Brunhilde back to the castle, and she was shocked to see Siegfried and Gutrune together and the ring on Siegfried's finger. She declared that Siegfried was a traitor. He swore a new oath on Hagen's spear: If he lied, Hagen's spear should stab him. Brunhilde also placed her hand on the spear and blessed the blade for this purpose.

Later, Hagen offered to avenge Brunhilde, but Brunhilde told him that Siegfried was protected with magic that made him invulnerable to any weapon. Only his back was unprotected. She had left it vulnerable, because she knew Siegfried would never turn and run from combat. That, Hagen decided, was where his spear must strike. Hagen also told Gunther that the only thing that could restore his honor was Siegfried's death.

Siegfried joined a hunting party made up of Hagen, Gunther, and a few vassals. Gunther was very depressed, and Siegfried tried to cheer him with a story from the years when he was a boy. As he sipped from a drink Hagen had given him, Siegfried began to remember Mime and how he could understand the bird that told him not to trust Mime. Then Hagen's drink restored all of Siegfried's memory. Siegfried recalled Brunhilde and their love.

Two ravens circled Siegfried, then flew away. Hagen asked if he knew what the birds had said. Siegfried replied, "Revenge for Hagen." With that, Hagen plunged his spear into Siegfried's back. Siegfried fell, saw one last vision of Brunhilde, and died.

Siegfried's corpse was taken back to Gunther's hall. Hagen told Gutrune that Siegfried had fallen prey to a wild boar. Gutrune accused Gunther of murdering Siegfried, but Gunther replied that Hagen was the "wild boar." Hagen confessed to murdering Siegfried. When Gunther tried to take the ring, Hagen killed him as well. But Siegfried's corpse raised a hand to keep Hagen from taking the ring.

Brunhilde had heard everything. She made Gutrune admit that Siegfried had loved Brunhilde all along. Brunhilde had a funeral pyre built with Siegfried's corpse placed on top. She forgave Siegfried and mourned her loss, then put on the ring and said that the fire would cleanse it from the curse. Taking a torch from a vassal, she shouted up to Loge to go to Valhalla and set it aflame, for the downfall of the gods had come. As the earthly funeral pyre blazed up, Brunhilde rode her Valkyrie steed full into the flames.

The flames engulfed the world. Then the Rhine swelled up, flooding over the fire. Riding the waves were the Rhinemaidens, who seized Hagen and dragged him under. They retrieved the ring with wild joy.

At last, the Rhine returned to its normal banks. Valhalla and the gods were gone, and a new day dawned.

See also: Norse Mythology; Operas and Their Stories.

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Rivers, Greek Mythological

Many of the actual rivers around the world have had stories and mythology centered on them, but the world's mythology also contains rivers that do not exist on Earth.

Ancient Greek mythology contains five of these rivers. They are Acheron, the river of woe; Cocytus, the river of lamentation; Lethe, the river of forgetfulness; Phlegethon, the river of fire; and Styx, the river of hate. All five were thought to have been linked to the passage of the soul to the afterworld.

Acheron was the river over which Charon ferried the dead to Hades. It was called the river of woe, because it was at this point that the dead were lost to the living.

Lethe was the river of forgetfulness or oblivion. The shades of the dead drank from this river so that they could forget about their past lives on Earth.

Phlegethon was the river of fire that burned but did not consume.

The most famous of these unearthly rivers is the river Styx. It wound around the underworld of Hades nine times, separating the world of the living from that of the dead. The Greek gods swore by this river when making vows. Should a god break a vow sworn on the river Styx, that god would be forced to drink from its waters and would become mute for nine years.

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Charon, the ferryman of Hades, the Greek underworld, transports dead souls across the river Styx. Once in the land of the dead, the souls lose all memory of their lives on Earth. This painting is by Flemish painter Joachim Patinir (c. 1480–1524). *(© Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)*

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Rocs/Rucs/Rukhs/ Rukhkhs

(Arabic)

Rocs were immense mythical birds of Arabian folklore.

Rocs were so strong that they could carry off elephants, their favorite food, and were so huge that the spread of their wings could blot out the Sun. They were best described in *The Arabian Nights: The Thousand and One Nights* (c. 800–900 C.E.), in the second voyage of Sinbad.

The heroic Sinbad was trapped and tied himself to a roc's leg. The roc carried him out of danger. Sinbad described the roc's egg, which was so huge he had mistaken it for a great, white, domed building. The roc was shown to be vengeful, dropping rocks to sink the ships of those who had killed a roc chick.

The Venetian merchant Marco Polo also mentioned the roc, but he claimed that it lived in Madagascar and that envoys from that country presented the great khan of China with a roc feather. It is possible that both the roc and the bird described by Marco Polo actually was the flightless, ostrichlike giant elephant bird (*Aepyornis maximus*), which lived in Madagascar, possibly as late as 1700.

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Rolandslied

(German)

The *Rolandslied,* a German epic poem, is based on the *Song of Roland,* the medieval French epic about Emperor Charlemagne. The *Rolandslied* was originally translated from the French in about 1170 C.E. by an author who identified himself as Priest Konrad.

The *Rolandslied* begins with the marriage and the subsequent banishment of Charlemagne's sister Bertha, who offended the emperor when she wed without his permission. Bertha gave birth to a son, Roland, who experienced an impoverished but optimistic childhood. As the boy grew, he became a true hero in the making, triumphing over adversaries and exacting tribute from his playmates to procure clothes.

Roland then boldly appeared at his uncle Charlemagne's palace, introduced himself, and just as boldly seized meat and drink from the royal table to satisfy his mother's needs. Charlemagne eventually forgave his sister her transgression, mostly for the sake of her spirited boy. The *Rolandslied* parallels the *Song of Roland* from this reconciliation to the punishment of the traitor Ganelon, which ends the earlier epic.

Legends that were later added to the *Rolandslied* leave the *Song of Roland* behind and claim that Roland did not die but was only badly injured. In these additions, after the hero recovered from his wounds, he went back to Germany and to his fiancée, Aude.

Upon his return to Germany, Roland learned that Aude, who had thought he had died, was now a nun. Overcome by sorrow, Roland constructed a hermitage at Rolandseek. From there, he could constantly keep watch over the island of Nonnenwörth, where his beloved wore her life away praying for his soul.

After a time, Aude died. The *Rolandslied* concludes with Roland's death. He was buried at Rolandseek, with his face turned toward the grave where his sweetheart had been laid to rest.

See also: Epics; *Song of Roland.*

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Role-Playing Games

Role-playing games, or RPGs, are interactive and collaborative forms of storytelling. These games are acted out by participants who take the roles of characters in a story.

A role-playing game is made up of two separate parts, the written text and the actual performance. Unlike the script of a play, a role-playing game text, called the manual, does not dictate the dialogue and actions of the performance, nor does it have a true narrative. Instead, it provides a general setting and an idea of the sort of characters, dialogues, and actions that might be appropriate to the game. In the case of a fantasy or science fiction game, the text also dictates what physical laws hold true.

Most role playing is performed in the genres of fantasy, science fiction, and horror. There are also historical games, such as those set during the American Civil War, but such games do not have the widespread appeal of other types.

Mechanics of the Game

What makes a role-playing game an unusual form of storytelling is that the story passes through several minds and aesthetic senses and is altered by each one in turn.

The process begins with the game designer, who creates the background and defines the world in which the story takes place. It then moves to the game master, the player in charge of the game, who creates the initial plot for the story. Then, the players create their characters and, in playing them, alter the plot and perhaps even the game world.

The creation of the story is a collaborative effort of all those who are present during the game. This leads to a constant interweaving of story threads and a lack of boundaries that might limit creativity.

The game world and the rules that define it can be altered during the course of a game. This world is sometimes altered when players or game masters contact the original designer to share how the game-world has evolved. This can result in an alteration to the official game rules.

The shaping of a role-playing game can be more chaotic than a traditional storytelling session, but there is never more than one person speaking at a time to describe the action or the scene. The narrative crown passes from one player to another, with each picking up where the previous player left off. In this way, the group of authors shares responsibility for their creation, each adding narrative threads to create a tighter, more cohesive whole.

Form

Even though the initial plot may become significantly altered during the progression of events, there usually is a sense of continuity. The same starting characters remain central to the action throughout, and early events have an effect on current and future plans and activities. There is also an element of closure, since every adventure has a beginning, middle, and end.

There are usually several narratives occurring at once, as each player sees the story from the point of view of his or her character. The events remain consistent as the story is passed from player to player. Each player can participate as much or as little as he or she likes.

Role-playing games are not generally intended as entertainment for an audience. Watching a role-playing game in progress is much like watching a staged reading of a play. This is generally an unsatisfying experience because of the spontaneous collective nature of the game.

For the players, however, role-playing games are both storytelling and literature in the truest sense, wrapping the participants in a spell and carrying them along through the story-world and events. Every participant has an active role and is caught up fully in the action as it occurs. Disbelief is suspended, as the story is happening in real time and events are occurring as a result of the players' actions.

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The lack of an audience also allows for an unlimited creative experience. Without the need to satisfy outsiders or to explain the context, the players may more freely express themselves and remain unconcerned with outside criticism, unlike actors in a public play.

Sometimes, the final story is written down after the game is over. As with other forms of oral storytelling, creating a written record can make the story more recognizable and more permanent, but it does not alter the core of the performance itself. Nor does it alter the fact that the narrative structure was created by an interactive performance. Even without a written record, the story lives on in the memories and minds of its performers.

Aaron Rosenberg

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Romance

The romance genre originally referred to sweeping epics, such as those written during the Middle Ages. These stories became much less grand and more intimate in the twentieth century. A modern romance is a tale with the emphasis on a quest for a special someone.

There are many subcategories of today's romance literature. In a contemporary romance, the setting and characters are modern, with modern mind-sets and goals. Love and marriage generally are the main goals. But there is a whole range of romances, from very mild-mannered, platonic love affairs, where sex only occurs after marriage, to passionate prose filled with detailed descriptions of lovemaking.

In a Hollywood romance, the timeframe is modern but there are the added trappings of stage, screen, jet-setting, steamy sex, and fashionable clothes. Again, the tales ultimately are of monogamous love.

The historical romance puts the lovers in a setting in the past, often in medieval times or the early days of the American West. Regency romances are set in the time of Jane Austen (1775–1817).

There are also genre-crossing romances, such as those that include time travel, fantasy elements, light horror (involving perhaps a vampire or werewolf hero), or science fiction. In all such variations, the romance is still the main element of the plot.

There are even inspirational romances. These do not include explicit sex scenes but do have a religious aspect along with the happy ending.

See also: Fantasy.

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Romance of Antar, The

(Arabian)

The Romance of Antar, an epic about the hero Antar, is made up of more than forty tales. Since new stories were added over the centuries, it is difficult to know the original count. The tales of Antar originated in the Bedouin tradition but quickly passed into the wider Islamic tradition. Although Antar is relatively unknown in the West, he and his stories soon became as important in the Islamic world as the stories of King Arthur became in Western Europe.

The authorship of these tales is uncertain. They may have been the work of ninth-century

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scholar Al Asmai, or they may come from the anonymous folk tradition, but there is no genuine proof of either. Antar may have been an actual man, a hero-poet of perhaps the fifth century, around whom fantastic tales were gathered.

In the tradition of a culture hero who must rise up from humble beginnings, Antar's parents were Shaddad, an Arab chieftain, and an Ethiopian slave-woman. The boy was raised as a slave among his father's tents and was described as unbelievably ugly. At the age of ten, Antar killed a wolf that was threatening the tribe's herds. By the age of fifteen, he fought the tribe's enemies with such courage that his father freed him and acknowledged him as a true hero and protector of his people.

The adult Antar became known as both a heroic warrior and a poet. The main thrust of his story concerns his quest to win the beautiful Ibla (or Ablah) for his wife. This quest takes him all over the Mediterranean region, through fantasy and reality, through all the Arab lands, and into the Christian realms as well. He met many important figures, including the king of Rome, with whose sister he had a son. Antar also met with the Byzantine emperor and the Frankish nobility.

The nineteenth-century composer Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov wrote a symphonic suite, his *Second Symphony,* also called the *Antar Symphony* (1869). The composer had read some of the tales in Russian translation. His version of Antar is only loosely based on the actual tales.

In Rimsky-Korsakov's four-part work, Antar saves the peri, or fairy, called Gul Nazar, and is granted three joys: glory in war, glory in power, and glory in love. Antar eventually grows weary of war and power, and turns to Gul Nazar for love. They spend a long time living happily together. Antar told Gul Nazar that if she sensed that he was becoming distant, she should take his life. She noticed one day that he was distracted, she embraced him, and Antar died in her arms.

See also: Epics.

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Rusalka/Rusalki

(Slavic)

According to Slavic, particularly Russian, folklore, the *rusalki* were the pale, often wild, and supernaturally beautiful water spirits or nature beings.

A *rusalka* is usually described as dancing or singing in the moonlight, or sitting and swinging on birch branches with her long hair flowing free. Her slender figure is either naked or clad in a flowing white gown. She is usually dripping wet from the lake, and some tales claim that if a rusalka, or more specifically her hair, dries out, she will die.

But for all her beauty, the rusalka is a perilous figure, especially for men. She generally is waiting for an unwary male to pass near enough to be snared, though she may seize the occasional woman as well. Some rusalki kill by tickling or drowning their prey; others may kill by torture.

There are different ideas in folklore about what force or mischance created the rusalka. The most common folk belief was that the rusalki are the souls of young women or girls who died unnatural or violent deaths. If a girl was murdered in or close to a lake, she would become a rusalka and inhabit that particular lake. Some tales state that the girl died at the hands of a betraying lover. Others say that the rusalka was a girl who had drowned herself, again because of a lover's betrayal.

There is some evidence that the rusalka originally may have been a nature spirit, one of spring fertility. In pagan Russia (and into modern Russia in some regions), there was a spring festival called *rusal'naia nedelia* during

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which people celebrated the new growth. Homes were decorated with fresh birch branches and girls adorned trees with cloth and garlands and danced the *khorovod,* a ritual circle dance.

It was believed that during this festival, the rusalka left her lake and wandered through the forests and fields. The implication is that by doing this, she was bringing water to the land and increasing its fertility.

At the end of *rusal'naia nedelia,* girls escorted an effigy of the rusalka back toward the water. In some areas, they burned or tore up and scattered pieces of the effigy over the grain fields or pretended to be priests and blessed it.

Other traditions included combing the effigy's hair as though it were a rusalka, bidding farewell to her at the local body of water, fastening stones to her coffin, throwing her into the water, and, finally, dancing the khorovod. The implication again is of a powerful fertility spirit that had to be carefully greeted and returned to her wild realm, or of a death-and-resurrection ritual.

A rusalka also was featured in two Slavic operas. Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov's *The May Night* (1878) features a rusalka who is freed from her fate by a young hero. In Czech composer Anton Dvořák's *Rusalka* (1901), the rusalka is a tragic fairytale figure and not at all dangerous.

See also: Mermaids; Slavic Mythology.

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Rustam

(Persian)

Rustam is the most important hero of the Persian epic *Shah-nameh* (Epic of kings), written by Ferdowsi in the eleventh century C.E.

Rustam was educated at the court of King Minuchihr. He first showed his heroism at ten years of age. The shah's white elephant broke loose and endangered everyone present. Rustam hit the animal with such power that the beast fell down, dead.

As a young man, Rustam caught and tamed the stallion Rakush. The intelligent horse stayed faithful to him forever after and helped the hero fight evil demons and dragons.

Faithful Rakush was stolen away while Rustam slept in the wilderness. The hero followed his horse's tracks and came upon a strange city where he met Tamine, the king's daughter. Tamine confessed that she had stolen Rakush in order to lure Rustam to her. She wished to become his wife.

Rustam and Princess Tamine were married, and Rustam continued to fight against evil. While Rustam was away, Tamine gave birth to a boy, Sohrab.

Years passed and Rustam did not return to Tamine. In his travels, he came face-to-face with a strong young warrior. They fought, and as the youth lay dying, Rustam learned that he had killed his own son.

See also: Ferdowsi/Firdawsi/Firdusi/Firdousi; *Retelling: Shah-nameh.*

Source

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Sadko

(Russian)

The story of Sadko is a *bylina,* or Russian epic poem, about a middle-class hero. Whereas the *bylini* of the Kiev cycle dealt with the adventures of heroic knights, Sadko's tale is true folklore.

Sadko was an impoverished merchant in the city of Novgorod who was also an excellent psaltry, or zither, player. His efforts to become a successful merchant were thwarted by the aloofness of the other merchants, who did not want him to join their ranks. With the help of the sea people, Sadko challenged the wealthy merchants to a wager: his life against their financial assistance on a voyage.

Sadko bet the other merchants that there was a golden fish in the water. Thanks to the sea people, Sadko was able to bring a golden fish up out of the water. The merchants were forced to provide him with ships and supplies. Sadko asked the townspeople to take care of his wife, Lubava, and he set sail.

The outward-bound trip was a success. Sadko visited many countries and profited from the journey. But on the way back, the ships stalled, and Sadko realized that the sailors had not made any sacrifices to Tsar Morskoi, tsar of the sea. To save his crew, Sadko leapt into the ocean, offering himself as the sacrifice. Instantly, the ships' sails fill with wind, and the crew headed toward Novgorod.

Sadko, meanwhile, floated down to the bottom of the sea and the tsar's palace. Tsar Morskoi had heard of Sadko's musical gifts and wished to hear him play. Sadko performed, delighting the tsar and the tsar's wife with his music. They decided to keep Sadko with them forever and marry him to their daughter, Princess Volkhova (in some versions, Chernava). But Sadko explained to the princess that he still loved his wife, Lubava.

There are two different variants of what happened next. In one, a mysterious man, who may have been either a priest or a saint, made the sea people sleep so that Sadko could escape. In another, Volkhova led Sadko to the shore of Lake Ilmen, near Novgorod. She loved Sadko so much that she wept herself into mist, becoming the River Volkhova, which flows from Lake Ilmen to the sea.

In the end, a wealthy Sadko was reunited with his wife. Presumably, they lived happily ever after.

See also: Bylina/Bylini.

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Saga of the Volsungs

(Norse)

The *Saga of the Volsungs,* or *Völsunga Saga,* relates the story of the Volsung clan. The central character of this work is the legendary hero Sigurd.

The stories that make up the saga were handed down for generations as epic poems. The saga was first written down by an anonymous author in Iceland during the thirteenth century, and this original manuscript was sent to King Frederick III of Norway and Denmark by Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson of Skalholt, Iceland, in 1656. It was delivered to the Royal Library of Copenhagen and promptly mislaid. The manuscript was not registered as an acquisition until 1821.

The story is divided into five parts: Sigurd's familial background, his youth, his interactions with the Gjukings and his murder, the life of his widow Gudrun, and Gudrun's marriage to Jonak, which signals the end of the Gjuking line.

Sigurd, like Siegfried in the Bavarian *Niebelungenlied,* proved his mettle by pulling a magical sword from an oak tree. Other similarities between the saga and tales found in France, Britain, Ireland, and Wales are evidence of an oral tradition in which stories were passed among neighboring peoples. The stories were changed to suit the local cultures, but many of the key ingredients—magical swords, dragons, and magic rings—remained the same.

Sigurd is a supernatural hero who descended from Odin, the chief Norse god. Sigurd was able to alter his shape and talk to birds. His horse, Grani, was a descendant of Odin's steed, Sleipnir.

In spite of these special gifts, Sigurd had an ordinary man's problems. He grew up without a father, a fact that the dragon Fafnir used to mock him, and he had a terrible relationship with his in-laws. One of his brothers-in-law eventually murdered him.

The anonymous author of the saga wrote that the name of Sigurd would remain known as long as the world endured. Today, the name itself is not as well known as the mythic elements of the story, which can be found as elements in works ranging from Richard Wagner's nineteenth-century operatic Ring Cycle to J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955).

See also: Epics; Norse Mythology.

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Sampo

(Finnish)

In the Finnish epic the *Kalevala* (1835), the *sampo* was a magic mill invented by the smith Ilmarinen at the request of the wizard Vainamoinen. It was made of several magical ingredients, including a swan's quill tip, a barren cow's milk, a barley grain, and the wool of one ewe.

In the tale, the device ground corn, gold, and salt. It was given to Louhi, who was the mistress of the land of Pohjola. She had saved Vainamoinen and demanded such a price for his life.

But when the rest of the lands began to suffer and only Pohjola thrived, Vainamoinen and other heroes set out to steal back the sampo. Louhi chased them in the form of a giant bird of prey.

In the ensuing battle, the sampo was smashed and fell into the sea. There, it continued to grind and turned the sea to salt water.

See also: *Kalevala.*

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Sandman

This graphic novel series by author Neil Gaiman is a fine example of how a storyteller can meld folklore and mythology with a modern story. Gaiman's character, Sandman, borrows from the sandman of nursery rhymes only in its relation to sleep-induced fantasy. This Sandman is the personification of the archetype of dreaming.

Comic books are more often associated with action than with story. They call to mind spandex-clad heroes who wreak swift and physical justice upon evildoers. But in 1988, the Sandman comic series appeared and not only challenged but completely upended the common perception of comics and the role storytelling played in that medium.

The Sandman, also known as Morpheus, Dream of the Endless, and a score of other names, is far from a typical comic hero. He is not human. Nor is he an alien, an angel, a demon, or even a god. While he interacts with all of these, they all acknowledge that the Sandman is something separate and distinct.

Morpheus, the King of Dreams, is one of seven archetypes, the brothers and sisters of the Endless. The others are Destiny, who reads all of the world's story in his book; Death, an unexpectedly chipper Goth-girl; the twins Desire and Despair; the long-absent Destruction (one of the story arcs involves a quest to find this prodigal); and Delirium, who used to be Delight. These archetypal figures have existed as long as humankind, and, depending on the point of view, they either control and shape humans or are controlled and shaped by them.

In the ten story arcs that make up *The Sandman,* the seven Endless siblings change and evolve, appearing through the lenses of many different cultures. In some cases, they die only to be replaced, as one character says in "The Wake," by another point of view.

It could easily be argued that storytelling is more important than plot in *The Sandman*. Many of the narratives are framed as a story told by one character to another. The tragic tale of the love between Morpheus and the African queen Nada, for example, is told by a father to his son as a coming-of-age story in "Season of Mists." In the episode titled "Ramadan," Dream takes a Middle Eastern city into his realm, effectively transforming it into legend. A writer kidnaps one of the classical Muses in "Calliope" and discovers what happens when the flow of stories will not cease. And the entire arc of "World's End" consists of a collection of travelers trapped in an inn, telling stories to pass the time. The latter is a nod to Boccaccio's *Decameron* (written c. 1349–1353) or Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (c. 1387–1400).

Other episodes take well-known stories and deliver them with a twist. For example, Dream invites the real Oberon and Titania, characters in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (c. 1595–1596), to see the first performance of the play. In another story, the legendary Greek hero Orpheus is found to be Dream's not-quite-mortal son, with disastrous consequences for them both. On the lighter side, "Three Septembers and a January" includes a charming account of Emperor Norton. This character lived during the nineteenth century and believed he was an emperor of part of North America.

The Sandman is not for children. Gaiman does not shrink from tragedy, violence, heartbreak, or horror. These dark elements are never present simply to shock or disgust, but have a crucial role in the story. Gaiman also balances them with beauty, nobility, and moments of unexpected humor. And always, through the dark and the light, the horror and the beauty, the story winds like a silken thread, binding the universe together.

Shanti Fader

See also: Motifs; Tale Types.

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Satire

A satire is a literary work that ridicules human vice and is characterized by sarcasm or irony. Satire also can be expressed as visual art, as in political cartoons. The word *satire* comes from the Latin word *satura,* which means a dish of mixed ingredients.

All satirists, regardless of the era in which they lived, have had the same goal: to hold up to mockery human and institutional flaws, from pedantry to bigotry, with the intent of bringing about change and reform.

The earliest recorded satirists were the Greeks, the most famous of whom was the playwright Aristophanes. In 422 B.C.E., his play *The Wasps* satirized the courts of Athens. Another of his plays, *The Clouds,* satirized the philosopher Socrates, whom Aristophanes disliked.

There were a great many Roman satirists. Quintus Horacius Flaccus, better known as Horace (65–8 B.C.E.), created satires that were sophisticated and relatively gentle. Iunius Juvenal (c. 55–138 C.E.) had a sharper style.

Throughout the Middle Ages, beast fables and fabliaux, comic tales told by French jongleurs, continued the satiric process. And in England, Geoffrey Chaucer satirized many levels of society in *The Canterbury Tales* (c. 1387–1400).

During the Renaissance the genre flourished with authors such as the playwright and poet Ben Jonson and Miguel de Cervantes. Cervantes's novel *Don Quixote* (1605) was intended as a comic satire of chivalric romance.

Many satirists were at work in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The work of English writer Jonathan Swift included the fiercely satirical *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), which is often mistaken for a children's book. Henry Fielding wrote entertaining but cynical novels, such as *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749). The poet Alexander Pope penned elegant and clever satires, such as *The Rape of the Locke* (1712).

In France, playwright Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, who was commonly known by his pseudonym, Molière, wrote dramatic plays. But he was best known for his farces, which satirized the court of King Louis XIV. François-Marie Arouet, better known as Voltaire, wrote novels that criticized the church and other institutions. His novel *Candide* (1759), which poked fun at an influential philosopher, was censored.

In the nineteenth century, English satire blossomed with the plays and writings of Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw, among others. At the same time, the American humorist, satirist, and entertainer Samuel Langhorne Clemens, better known as Mark Twain, was writing the novels and stories that made him America's most beloved social critic.

With the wider venue for entertainment that became available in the twentieth century, satire turned up in many different forms. American author Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1961) is still considered a classic satire on the murderous insanity of war. A number of films, such as *Sullivan's Travels* (1941) and the savagely antiwar *Dr. Strangelove, Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964), are brilliantly satirical.

On television, one of the longest-running programs to date, *The Simpsons* (the first episode aired in 1989), is further proof that satire is alive and well in popular culture, as is the political satire of *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart (since 1998) and *The Colbert Report* (since 2005).

The Internet is rife with examples of political satire, such as the parody newspaper *The Onion.*

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Saxo Grammaticus

(c. 1150)

Saxo Grammaticus was a Danish historian who wrote an important work on the history of Denmark called the *Gesta Danorum,* or the *Great Deeds of Denmark*.

Saxo, as he is commonly known, was probably born about 1150, possibly in Zealand. He was a cleric with a strong knowledge of classical lore and theology. He may have studied at a major university, possibly in Paris. Saxo's history of Denmark was written at the suggestion of Archbishop Absalon of Lund, who died in 1201, before the work was finished. The assignment of this work to Saxo probably means that he held a high office and may have been a close acquaintance of the archbishop.

It is believed that the writing of the history occupied the greater part of Saxo's life. Originally intended to be a contemporary history of Saxo's time, *Gesta Danorum* eventually became a complete history of Denmark from the earliest mythical period to the year 1187. It is written in elegant, highly ornate Latin, which is why the author was nicknamed Grammaticus, which means "the lettered one."

The book is divided into sixteen parts. The first nine parts contain a great deal of mythological material, and the last seven concern historical events close to the author's own time. The sources for this work appear to have been ancient Danish poems, runic inscriptions, and Norwegian-Icelandic sagas.

Among the famous stories included in the work are the myth of Balder's death; the history of Amleth, the Danish prince who was the inspiration for Shakespeare's Hamlet; and the story of the archer Palnatoki, the Danish version of William Tell.

Saxo's legacy lies in the stories that are in many cases the only versions that exist from Denmark. The *Gesta Danorum* sheds light on Norse mythology and Danish history.

See also: *Gesta Danorum*.

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Scapegoats

A scapegoat is a person, animal, or object that is blamed for bad luck or disease. Typically, a scapegoat is either driven off or ritually slain to eliminate the evil from an individual or group.

The term *scapegoat* derives from Jewish tradition. In the Old Testament, in the Book of Leviticus, Aaron is said to have symbolically placed all the sins of the people onto a goat, subsequently sending it off into the wilderness. The concept, however, is much older and is found worldwide.

In ancient Greece, an individual would take on all the sins of a city, then be driven outside and stoned to death. In less violent folk cures, the problem of a wart might be transferred symbolically to a stone or tree. In South America, in the Inca Empire, a black llama might be used as a scapegoat to remove illness from a village. In some South American villages, a guinea pig would be chosen as the scapegoat and would be ritually slain.

An extreme example of a scapegoat would be a deity who died for the sake of a specific people or for all people, as Jesus is believed to have done for Christians. An unfortunate psychological version of choosing a scapegoat is the placing of blame on a person or group, racial or national, for any societal problems. This results in racism, sexism, ageism, and similar worldwide issues.

Scapegoats also are used in politics. A politician or political party might be blamed for national problems. In sports events, one player might be blamed for an entire team's losses.

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In literature, perhaps the most obvious example of a scapegoat appears in William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies* (1954), in which an overweight boy becomes the victim of other boys.

See also: Motifs.

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Scheherazade

(Arabic)

Scheherazade is perhaps one of the world's most famous storytellers. The character exists in the framing story of the collection of tales known as *The Thousand and One Nights,* or *The Arabian Nights,* which may date to the ninth or tenth century C.E. It is not certain whether this legendary character was based on a historical figure.

In *The Thousand and One Nights,* King Shahryar, the legendary king of Samarkand in present-day Uzbekistan, found out that his wife had been unfaithful to him. He was so horrified by this deception that he promptly vowed to trust no woman. He slew his wife. He then remarried over and over again, killing each wife in turn before she had an opportunity to be unfaithful to him.

Scheherazade was the daughter of an officer at Shahryar's court. She offered to marry the king, believing she could put a stop to this cruel practice. Even though her father tried to dissuade her, Scheherazade insisted on her plan.

On her first night with King Shahryar, Scheherazade told the king that she would entertain him with a story. So exciting was her tale that the king listened in wonder, never noticing the passing hours. But as the dawn began to break, Scheherazade deliberately broke off her story at the most exciting point. Demurely, she pointed out that the night was over. So eager was the king to hear the rest of the story that he spared her life for that day.

Each night for the next thousand nights, Scheherazade repeated her ruse. She told the king a series of exciting stories, one leading in an unbroken succession into the next, and the last tale each night ended in a cliffhanger. At the end of the thousand and one nights, King Shahryar was so overwhelmed by Scheherazade and her storytelling talents that he kept her as his wife and swore never again to slay a woman.

Scheherazade's story has inspired several composers. Russian composer Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov wrote an 1880 symphonic suite that bears her name, and the French composer Maurice Ravel wrote a piece by the same name in 1898.

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Science Fiction

Science fiction is a literary genre that is based on real or imagined developments in science or technology. The basic themes of science fiction include space travel, marvelous inventions or discoveries, life in other worlds, first contact with aliens, time travel, and the invasion of Earth by aliens.

Perhaps the earliest author to use genuine science in his work was the French novelist Jules Verne, who wrote during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Two of Verne's early works, *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865) and *Around the Moon* (1870), contain some major factual errors. But they also include some amazingly accurate details—a launch from what is now Cape Canaveral, Florida, the retrofiring of the capsule's engines on the far

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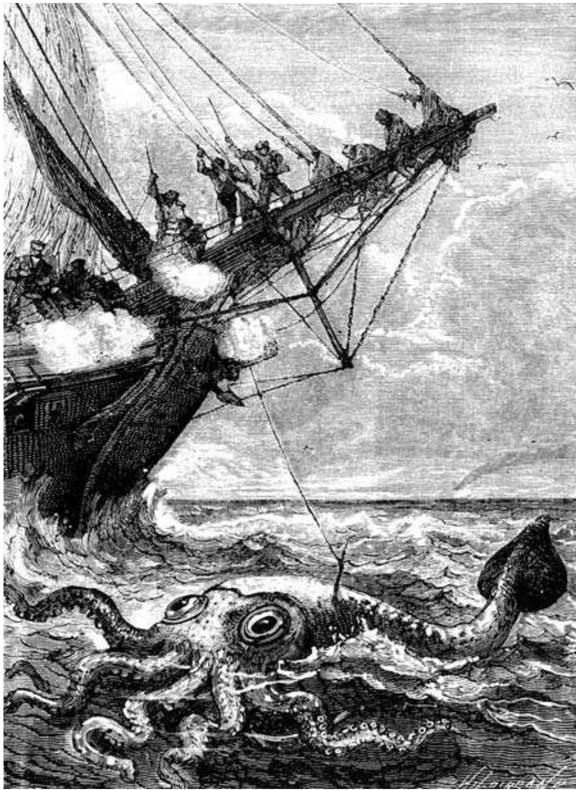

Jules Verne, a novelist who wrote from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century, was one of the masters of early science fiction. This original illustration from his most famous work, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea,* shows the crew of the *Alecton* attacking a giant squid. *(© Art Resource, NY)*

side of the Moon to get the capsule back to Earth, and a splashdown. Verne's novel *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1869) is also quite accurate, and it has been made into several movies.

Verne's contemporary, British author H.G. Wells, created some of science fiction's most enduring works. Wells was more interested in storytelling than in getting the scientific details right, and his storytelling was strong enough in such works as *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898) to influence later generations. Wells's works also have inspired a number of films.

Many works in the genre were published in the first decades of the twentieth century. But it was not until about 1930 that magazine publisher Hugo Gernsback coined the term *science fiction*—and it stuck.

From the 1950s to the present, many great science fiction writers have written novels and short stories. Among the greats have been Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, and Robert A. Heinlein. Women writers had to use pseudonyms until the 1980s, since publishers did not think that women could write successful science fiction; Andre Norton, for instance, actually was Alice North, and C.L. Moore actually was Catherine Lucille Moore.

Science fiction writers today strive to convince their readers that their stories are possible and are derived from scientific principles. So-called hard science fiction generally is written by authors who also are scientists. Geoffrey Landis, formerly of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), keeps as true to the sciences, such as physics or astronomy, as is possible in his stories. Works in the subgenre of soft science fiction, by writers such as Lois McMasters Bujold, emphasize the cultural angles of the stories and are based on social sciences, such as anthropology and sociology.

Another category of science fiction, called space opera, is pure storytelling. These stories of space adventures make little or no attempt at scientific plausibility. A fine example of space opera is the works of E.E. "Doc" Smith, particularly his Lensmen series.

See also: Fantasy; Horror; Mystery Stories; Romance.

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Seanachai

(Irish)

The word *seanachai,* pronounced *shan-u-kee* or *shen-u-kee,* is Gaelic for "storyteller."

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Originally a wandering storyteller who was akin to bards and medieval troubadours, the seanachai was an important part of ancient Irish and Scottish preliterate society. These storytellers were largely the ones who ended up being responsible for the survival of oral traditions and folktales.

In small Irish and Scottish villages, stories always were told at night, after the day's work was done. People from the village would congregate at the house where the seanachai was staying to hear everything from the stories of ancient Celtic mythology to the latest gossip from the next village.

The seanachai was often the center of a ceilidh, pronounced *kay-lee,* an informal gathering of villagers around someone's hearth for an evening of entertainment. Ceilidhs still exist in Ireland and Scotland and in Celtic areas of North America, though they are now usually formal music and storytelling events.

The seanachai also served a more subversive purpose during the time of English dominance of Ireland. From about the sixteenth century to the twentieth century, the English tried to suppress the native Gaelic language and Irish culture. So while the seanachai appeared to be doing nothing more than innocently traveling around and telling stories, they were actually teaching the children their native language and culture, and also keeping the culture alive in the minds and hearts of adults.

Modern seanachai no longer need to worry about being the only means of keeping oral traditions alive, and they do not have to tell their stories in secret. Instead, modern seanachai are openly honored as storytellers.

See also: *Retelling: The Storyteller at Fault.*

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Seelie Court and Unseelie Court

(Scottish)

In Scottish folklore, the seelie court and unseelie court are the two groups of the fairy folk. The seelie is good and the unseelie is evil.

The seelie, or blessed, court is made up of beings that tend to be benign and kindly toward humans. Members of the seelie court sometimes can be seen at twilight, often in elegant, courtly processions. The seelie court may help humans in need by offering gifts of magic or food, and they will be sure to repay any kind deed. However, they are just as swift to avenge any wrongs or insults. Fairy folk who are members of the seelie court usually are beautiful.

The unseelie, or unholy, court is made up of beings that are evil in nature and despise humans. They sneer at kindness and have no understanding of mercy. These beings are rarely seen, at least not by humans who live to tell the tale. There is no way for a human to appease them, but there are many ways to anger them. So avoidance is the safest defense. Members of the unseelie court are usually ugly and sometimes outright hideous.

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Seers

(Greek)

The ancient Greeks had many myths featuring seers, which are individuals who could see the future and make prophecies for good or ill.

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Apollo and the Delphic Oracle

Apollo was the Greek god of prophecy. The Delphic oracle, located in the city of Delphi, was sacred to Apollo.

The oracle, a priestess called the Pythia, sat in a cave and made prophesies that were said to come from Apollo. Her proclamations were open to a great deal of interpretation. If a king asked the oracle about the outcome of an upcoming battle, for example, the oracle's response of "a kingdom will be lost" could mean either victory or defeat.

Teiresias

Teiresias is perhaps the most familiar of the Greek seers. He was the blind prophet who saw more clearly than any other man.

He was also the only man who knew from experience what it was like to be a woman. This understanding was the result of a foolish deed: Teiresias once struck apart two mating snakes, which was against the gods' rules. He was instantly turned into a woman for seven years. Some versions say that as a woman Teiresias married and settled down. Others say that he became a prostitute to experience all he could about the sensual life.

At the end of the seven years, Teiresias wanted to be male again. He sought and found two snakes mating, struck them apart, and became a man once more. He was then asked by Zeus and Hera which gender received more pleasure from sex. Zeus said it was women; Hera claimed it was men. Teiresias agreed with Zeus that yes, women had more fun.

Hera, who hated to lose, struck the mortal man blind. Since Zeus could not undo what his wife had just done, he tried to compensate by giving Teiresias the gift of prophecy.

Melampus

Melampus of Thessaly was a cousin of Bellerophon, the only man to ride Pegasus, the winged horse.

Melampus gained the gift of prophecy after witnessing some servants killing a serpent that had young. Melampus took pity on the young ones and took care of them. One day as he slept, the now-grown snakes licked his ears, which gave him the language of birds and snakes, as well as other creatures. This gave him the ability to foretell future events, since the beasts often knew what would happen before humans did.

In one myth, Melampus was caught and imprisoned. While in captivity, Melampus heard the termites whispering. They said they had nearly eaten through the roof timbers and that the roof was about to collapse. Melampus warned his captors and demanded that they release him. They took his warning in time, and when the roof did come crashing down, no one was harmed.

Aesacus

Aesacus was one of the many children of King Priam of Troy and one of three who were prophetic. It was Aesacus who foresaw that his brother Paris would cause the downfall of Troy and advised his father not to let his brother live.

Aesacus was one of the few members of the royal house of Troy who was not killed in the Trojan War or enslaved after it. In fact, he avoided Troy, preferring to wander the countryside, where he fell in love with Hesperia, the daughter of the Cebren River. Some tales say that the two were wed, but others claim that Aesacus pursued Hesperia in vain.

Hesperia was struck by a poisonous snake and died. The grief-stricken Aesacus dove from a high cliff into the sea. The goddess Tethys turned Aesacus into a seabird.

Helenus

The second prophetic son of King Priam of Troy was Helenus, whose mother was Queen Hecuba.

Helenus was captured by the Greeks during the Trojan War and forced to tell them how Troy could be taken. He prophesied that they must first persuade Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, to join them, which the Greeks did. In an alternate version, Helenus predicted a win

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if the Greeks could kill Troilus, half-brother to Helenus, which Achilles did.

After the war, Helenus was enslaved by Neoptolemus and taken to the Greek city-state of Epirus. When Neoptolemus was slain, Helenus found himself free and the inheritor of part of Epirus.

Andromache was another slave who was freed and the widow of Helenus's brother, Hector. Helenus married Andromache, and their story ended happily.

Cassandra

Cassandra was the third of King Priam's children with the gift of prophecy. Her mother was also Queen Hecuba.

Cassandra promised to lie with Apollo if he gave her the gift of prophecy, but then she broke her promise. The angry god cursed her so that although her prophesies were accurate, no one would believe them. Cassandra warned of the coming of the Trojan War, but in vain. She pleaded with the Trojans not to take in the Trojan horse, but they would not listen.

After the city fell, Cassandra tried to find safety in the temple of Athena. She was caught and raped and made the concubine of King Agamemnon of Mycene. Cassandra tried to warn Agamemnon that his wife, Clytemnestra, was going to kill him. Agamemnon refused to listen, and he and Cassandra were both slain.

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Sekhmet

(Egyptian)

In ancient Egyptian language, the word *sekhmet* means the (female) powerful one. This was an eminently suitable name to give the destructive and protective lion goddess.

Sekhmet came into being when the eye of the sun god, Re, was sent forth in the form of the goddess Hathor to destroy rebellious humans. The eye ran amuck and became Sekhmet.

Her violent nature, which it was necessary to placate, made her a goddess of disease. One of her titles was the Lady of Plague. Her arrows were invisible deliverers of illness and

Sekhmet was a fierce lion-headed goddess of ancient Egypt. She could be a raging warrior, whose arrows delivered illness and death, but Sekhmet also was the patron deity of the bonesetters' guild of physicians. This statue comes from the tomb of King Tutankhamen and dates to the fourteenth century B.C.E. *(Borromeo/Art Resource, NY)*

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death, and medical texts gave directions for warding off her messengers. Priests of her temple practiced medicine and also may have served as veterinarians.

In the Egyptian city of Memphis, Ptah was Sekhmet's consort. Their offspring was Nefertum, a solar god who was associated with perfume and war. Sekhmet first appeared in the texts of the late Old Kingdom (2919–2513 B.C.E.), in which it is told that she conceived the king.

Sekhmet appeared most frequently as a woman with the head of a lioness. Her symbol was an aegis, or shield, depicted as a broad collar-type necklace topped with the head of a lioness. The aegis later became a symbol of Bastet, who is frequently cited as Sekhmet's balancing opposite, embodying maternal and benign forces.

Noreen Doyle

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Seth/Set/Sutekh

(Egyptian)

The Egyptian god Seth embodied the forces of chaos. He appeared in the earliest texts as an enemy (and occasional ally) of the falcon god, Horus, who was his brother and rival for the crown.

Seth usually was represented as a strange animal with tall, flat-topped ears and a long, curving snout, or a man with the head of this beast. The animal has never been identified and may have been entirely imaginary. Seth also was associated with a variety of animals, particularly pigs and donkeys.

In the course of Seth's battle with his brother for the crown, he wounded Horus's eye and Horus wounded Seth's testicles. The earth god, Geb, divided Egypt equally between them but changed his mind, revoking Seth's portion.

Seth was commonly referred to as the son of Nut, the sky goddess. Texts assigned various spouses to Seth, usually his sister, Nephthys, or the hippopotamus goddess of pregnancy and childbirth, Theouris. Although he was a member of the Ennead of Heliopolis (a group of nine gods), he was the separated, unsocial god, called the "enemy of boundaries." He violated the accepted limits of sex by raping Horus.

Seth's existence, however terrible, was essential to the Egyptian view of a balanced universe. He ruled the regions beyond the Nile Valley proper, principally the so-called red lands (the desert) and foreign places. The sun god, Re, put Seth's aggressiveness to good use by employing him to defeat the serpent Apep, who threatened the solar barque, or ship, each night. Re gave Seth the power of thunder.

Horus and Seth were ultimately reconciled, and there were temples devoted to a composite Horus-Seth deity. Worship of Seth seems to have come to an end at about 1100 B.C.E., when Egypt's foreign empire dwindled. Particularly after the Assyrian occupation of Egypt in the sixth century B.C.E., he became more demon than god, a reviled figure in myth and ritual.

The Greeks knew Seth as Typhon.

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Setne Khamwaset Cycle

(Egyptian)

The literary character Setne Khamwaset was inspired by the fourth son of Ramses II (c. 1304–1237 B.C.E.). The name Setne derives from a priestly office held by the historical prince of the same name.

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The historical prince Khamwaset was priest of the god Ptah in Memphis, Egypt. He instituted a new kind of tomb for the sacred bulls and undertook restoration of the Old Kingdom monuments at Giza and Saqqara. These antiquarian interests have prompted some to call him the first Egyptologist. His intellectual activities inspired a reputation that survived him by more than 3,000 years.

Two of the stories built around Khamwaset's intellectual reputation survive more or less intact. Others survive as fragments.

Setne and Naneferkaptah

The beginning of the text about Setne and Naneferkaptah is lost, but it is assumed that the story begins with Setne Khamwaset seeking out the tomb of Prince Naneferkaptah. This tomb was rumored to contain a book of spells composed by the god Thoth.

Setne and his adopted brother Inaros found the book, which was defended by two ghosts, Naneferkaptah and his wife, Ahwere. Ahwere warned Setne that Naneferkaptah's possession of the book had led to their deaths. She also told the story of how she and Naneferkaptah, both children of King Mernebptah, fell in love and wished to marry.

King Mernebptah, wishing for numerous descendants, had planned to marry Ahwere to a general, but a clever verbal jest by Ahwere changed his mind. Ahwere and Naneferkaptah married and had a son, Merib. From an ancient priest, Naneferkaptah learned of the magic book, which was in a series of nested boxes surrounded by noxious creatures and an eternal serpent.

Naneferkaptah departed from Coptos in a magical boat made of wax with a waxen crew to seek the magic book. He defeated the guardians and gained the magic spells, returning safely home. Naneferkaptah copied out the book, dissolved the copy in beer, and drank it, literally imbibing its knowledge.

Thoth learned of the theft and petitioned Re for help. The sun god drowned Merib and Ahwere. From his dead family, whom he temporarily resurrected, Naneferkaptah learned of Thoth's accusation. He became afraid to return to Memphis: What would the king do upon learning of the deaths of his daughter and grandson? So Naneferkaptah tied the book to his body, jumped into the river, and drowned. His body was recovered and buried with the book.

After hearing of these grim events from Ahwere, Setne still wanted the book. He gambled with Ahwere for it, playing *senet,* a board game, only to be caught in a spell that trapped his body in the earth. Inaros managed to save his brother, and they escaped with the book.

One day, Setne caught sight of Tabubu, a beautiful woman whose father was a priest of the cat goddess, Bastet. Setne badly wanted to sleep with her. Arrangements were made for them to meet at her palatial house in Bubastis. But before she would make love to him, Tabubu insisted that Setne grant all his possessions to her, which he did. Then Tabubu demanded the death of Setne's children. Again he complied, and Tabubu threw their bodies to the dogs and cats.

Just as Setne and Tabubu were about to consummate the relationship, Setne came to his senses. He found himself naked, and the pharaoh was nearby. Ashamed, he called, "Naneferkaptah did this to me!" Setne then learned that his children were still alive.

The pharaoh insisted that Setne return the book to the tomb of Naneferkaptah. Setne complied. Naneferkaptah's spirit asked that the bodies of Ahwere and Merib be moved from Coptos to Memphis. Setne was unable to find their graves until Naneferkaptah disguised himself as an old man and indicated the place beneath a house. The bodies were brought to Naneferkaptah's tomb, which was sealed shut again.

Setne and Siosiris

The part of the story of Setne and Siosiris that has been preserved begins with Setne's wife being told to prepare a special drink so that she could conceive. Conception was achieved,

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and Setne dreamt that the boy was to be named Siosiris, which means son of Osiris.

Siosiris was a prodigy who quickly learned to write better than his instructor. One day, Siosiris and his father witnessed two funerals, one of a rich man accompanied by many mourners and the other of a poor man with no mourners at all. Setne proclaimed how much happier the rich man seemed to be, to which the boy replied that he hoped to have the fate of the poor man in the netherworld.

Siosiris took Setne to the netherworld, where they witnessed punishments of the wicked. They saw people braiding ropes that were forever being eaten by donkeys and a man whose eye socket was used as a door pivot. They came upon the hall of Osiris, where they saw a richly dressed man. Siosiris identified him as the poor man. The rich man was the one who lay beneath the door.

By the age of twelve, Siosiris was unsurpassed in learning and magic. But one day, a Nubian magician came to the court with a challenge. He would "take the shame of Egypt to Nubia" unless someone could read a sealed document he carried without breaking the seal.

The king sent for Setne, who prepared himself for ten days. Siosiris offered to help, but Setne dismissed his offer because of the boy's youth. Siosiris, however, demonstrated that he was able to read all of Setne's books without opening them.

The Nubian Magician's Tale

The next day, Siosiris related the following tale, which was contained within the sealed document:

A Nubian king overheard three Nubian sorcerers saying they were each capable of sending a plague upon Egypt. Horus-the-son-of-the-Nubian-woman said that he could kidnap the pharaoh, beat him, and return him to Egypt in the span of six hours. At the order of the king of Nubia, the Egyptian King Menkhpresiamun was subjected to this humiliation.

The king's councilors did not believe Menkhpresiamun when he related what had happened to him during the night. So the king summoned his own magician, Horus-son-of-Paneshe. This magician determined through a dream that a hidden book of magic was needed to end the Nubian sorceries, which were now taking place each night.

Horus-son-of-Paneshe sent wax figures to Nubia to kidnap the Nubian king, beat him, and return him to Nubia, in the span of six hours. The enraged Nubian king ordered Horus-the-son-of-the-Nubian-woman to go to Egypt to cast spells there.

The Nubian and Egyptian magicians confronted each other in Menkhpresiamun's court, where they undertook a magical duel. Horus-the-son-of-the-Nubian-woman took the shape of a gander, and Horus-son-of-Paneshe became a fowler.

At this moment, Horus-the-son-of-the-Nubian-woman's mother received prearranged signs indicating that her son was in mortal danger. She flew to Egypt as a goose, only to be likewise threatened by Horus-son-of-Paneshe. The two Nubians promised to leave and not return to Egypt for 1,500 years.

Noreen Doyle

See also: Wizards.

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Shaggy Dog Stories

A shaggy dog story is a lengthy, humorous story that is drawn out for as long as an audience will allow with a surprise letdown of an ending. This type of joking story has existed for centuries. These stories became known as shaggy dog stories in the mid-twentieth century,

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when the quintessential shaggy dog story was popular.

There are two versions of the basic tale, both set in England. In the first version, an advertisement was placed in the *Times* of London, announcing a competition to find the shaggiest dog in the world. So the protagonist underwent a lengthy and detailed amount of effort to find the right dog. But he was rejected with, "We don't think he's so shaggy." A Canadian variant on the story concludes with, "Not shaggy enough!"

In the second version, an aristocratic nobleman lost his highly valuable and very shaggy dog. He advertised repeatedly in various newspapers. At last, a man in New York saw the advertisement and underwent great trouble to find a dog that matched the specifications in the advertisement. The American went through more trouble to bring the dog to London. He presented himself at the owner's majestic home but was rejected by the butler, who exclaimed, "But not so shaggy as that, sir!"

Another type of shaggy dog story ends in a pun or play on words, such as hiding a baby's gender by saying "We have to skirt the issue." In the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction,* the shaggy dog story ending in a pun is known as a "feghoot." In a regular feature of the magazine, "The Adventures of Ferdinand Feghoot in Time and Space," each episode was a shaggy dog tale.

See also: Tall Tales.

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Shape-Shifters

Shape-shifters are human or humanlike beings that are able to transform into animals. These enigmatic characters are popular in legends around the world.

Shape-shifter characters appear in folklore from all historical eras and have been successfully transplanted to modern novels and movies. Dracula and the werewolf are two such timeless characters.

Lycanthropy

Lycanthropy, from the Greek *lykoi,* meaning "wolf," and *anthropos,* meaning "human being," is a psychiatric state in which the patient believes he or she is a wolf or some other nonhuman animal. This psychiatric condition has spawned many shape-shifter stories.

Folklore, fairy tales, and legends from many nations show evidence of lycanthropic belief. These examples can be linked to the concepts of animal guardian spirits, vampires, totemism, witches, and werewolves. Traditionally, the afflicted person takes the form of the most dangerous beast of prey in the region: the wolf or bear in North America, Europe, and northern Asia; the hyena or leopard in Africa; and the tiger in southern Asia.

Wolfman Variants

In countries where wolves are not present, shape-shifters morph into creatures ranging from weretigers in India to African wereleopards, werehyenas, werejackals, and even weretoads.

European werefox legends portrayed the creature as a usually female, almost fairylike being that lived as a fox in the wild. There are many European stories of fox-maidens running away from their husbands after recovering the skins that the husbands had hidden away.

In China and Japan there are numerous werefox legends. In these legends, werefoxes lived as human beings and were witnessed in the act of transforming or roaming around in a half-transformed state.

Seaside Shape-Shifters

The wereseals, also called *silkies* or *selkies,* are fairly common in the folklore of regions

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located near the sea. Wereseals sometimes exist in large groups of mixed gender or occasionally as lone females. These single wereseals develop relationships with human males on land and then later return to the sea.

The kelpies of Celtic folklore are able to live underwater. They can take a number of forms, from a horse, to a horse with a fish tail, to a man covered in horsehair. Their main function seems to be abducting or drowning people.

Even waterfowl can be shape-shifters, as seen in the many tales of swan-maidens in world folklore from India to Scandinavia.

Japanese Traditions

The playful and prankish *kitsune* and *tanuki* of the Far East are almost the direct opposite of European werewolves. Rather than people who turn into animals, they are usually animals who can choose to masquerade as humans.

The *tengu* of Japanese legend were not as troublesome or mischievous as the kitsune or tanuki. Although some pranksters were found among them, they were generally seen as wise and respected teachers. They were either humans who had become tengu or demigods or a race of monsters entirely separate from humans. Tengu could take several forms, ranging from human to bird and all combinations in between.

The Japanese also believed in a shape-shifting demon that appeared as a cat. This cat often had two tails. Sometimes, it could change size and become larger than a person. Its main purpose was sucking human blood. After it had killed someone, it was able to transform into an exact copy of that person. The cat being would use this ability to get close to new victims.

Theriomorphism and Shape-Shifting Deities

Another name for a shape-shifter is a theriomorph, a being that can assume an animal as well as a human form. The theriomorph's identity is shaped by the aspects of animals that it recognizes in its personality and actions.

Spiritual shape-shifters are able to assume animal as well as human spirit forms. This type of shape-shifting is common to many of the totemic tales of tribal societies. There are also stories concerning deities that are able to change their forms into any number of animals and birds.

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See also: Werewolves; *Retelling: The Six Swans.*

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Shipwrecked Sailor, The Story of the

(Egyptian)

Taken from a source dating to the mid-twelfth dynasty (c. 1991–1786 B.C.E.), the literary work *The Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor* is narrated by an unnamed sailor whose only function is to present the events. This text consists of three nested tales: a framing story describing the present circumstances of the unnamed sailor and two tales that he tells of past events.

The sailor and his companions moored their vessel in Lower Nubia at the end of an unsuccessful mission. The expedition leader was despondent over their failure. The sailor suggested that he should present himself honestly

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to the king and hope for the best: After all, at least no one had died. The sailor then presented a story of something similar that had happened to him.

The Sailor's Tale

The sailor had set sail for the king's mines in the Sinai with a good, experienced crew. Despite their skill, a storm wrecked the ship. The sailor found himself the sole survivor cast ashore on an island where food was so abundant that he gathered up more than he could carry.

As the sailor prepared a burned offering to the gods, an enormous bearded serpent appeared. The serpent threatened him with annihilation if he did not explain how he had come there. The sailor complied.

This knowledge mollified the serpent, who declared that it was a god who had brought the sailor to this "island of the *ka* (soul)." The serpent predicted that a ship would rescue the sailor, and the sailor would return to his home. Then, the serpent told his own tale of woe.

The Serpent's Tale

The serpent had once lived on the island with seventy-four members of his family, including a little daughter. A star fell from the sky, and, when the serpent arrived home, he found the burned corpses of his kin. Only his daughter survived.

The serpent then pointed out that the sailor would return home again and be among his own family, which was the best that anyone could hope to have happen.

The sailor promised the serpent riches from Egypt, where he would be worshipped as a god. At this, the serpent laughed, because he had all these things already: He was the Lord of Punt, the land from which incense and many other Egyptian valuables used in temple rituals originated. He told the sailor that upon his departure, the island would become water again.

The Egyptian ship came as the serpent had said. The serpent then asked the sailor to spread word of the serpent's name at home. He rewarded the sailor with the products of Punt, including myrrh, oils, spices, and ivory. The sailor and the rescue ship's crew gave praise to the serpent and returned to the king's residence in Egypt. The sailor gave the king the serpent's gifts and, in return, he was made an official. And so the sailor's tale ended.

The expedition leader, after listening patiently to all of this, remarked, "Don't act clever, my friend! Who gives water to a goose when the land brightens for its slaughter in the morning?" This concluded the story. It has since been interpreted variously as an expression of hope or an expression of despair.

Noreen Doyle

See also: Tale Types.

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Shu

(Egyptian)

Shu was the Egyptian god of the air. Shu was either sneezed or exhaled into existence along with his sister and consort, Tefnut, by Atum as the first act of creation.

Shu and Tefnut went on to conceive the earth god, Geb, and the sky goddess, Nut. Shu's name means both emptiness and dryness, and he served as the counterpart of Tefnut, who was associated with moist air. Like Tefnut, Shu appeared sometimes as a lion but more often as a man wearing a false beard and a feather on his head.

Shu lifted Nut from Geb, separating Earth from heaven. Typically shown as a man standing with his arms raised to support the vault of the sky above his head, Shu thus stands

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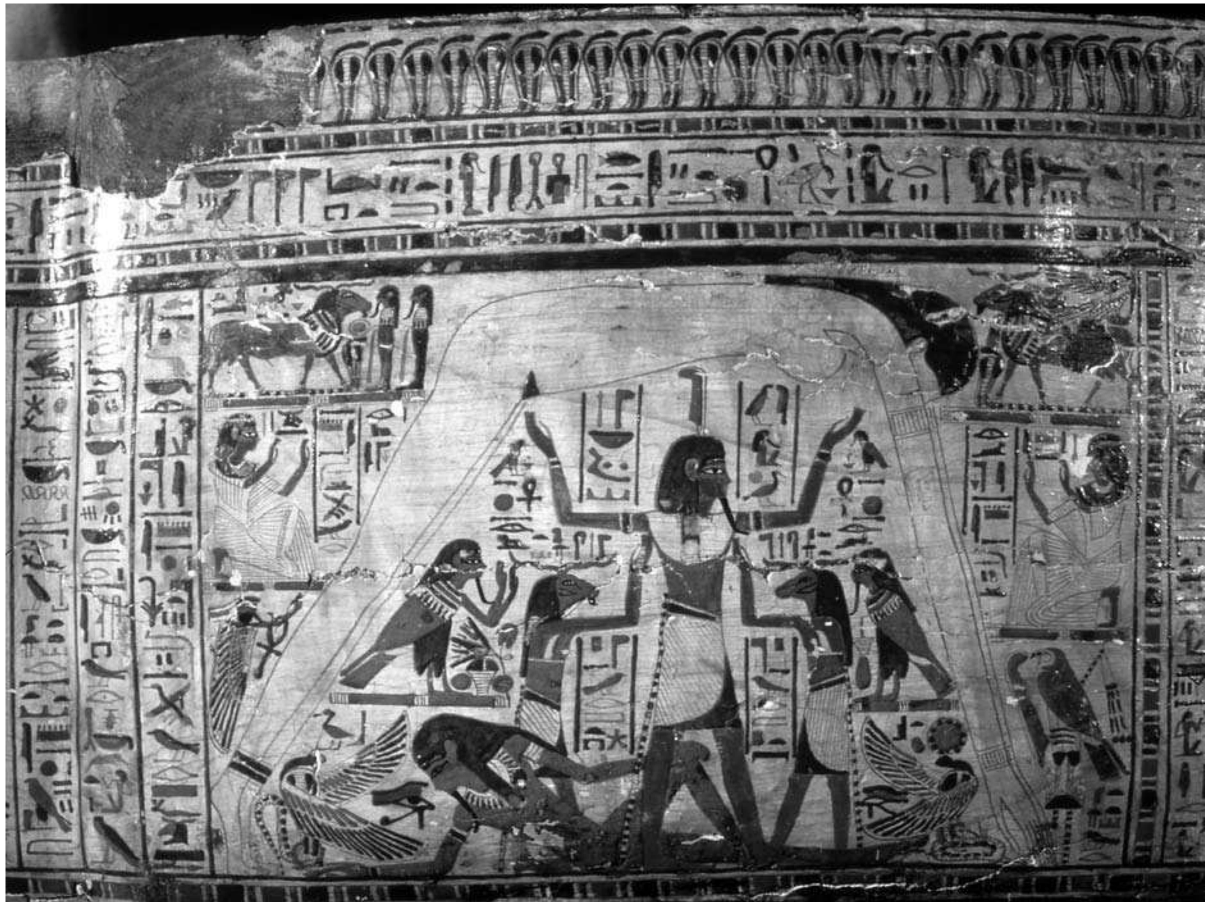

In this ancient Egyptian creation scene, the air god Shu, assisted by two ram-headed gods, separates the sky goddess Nut from the earth god Geb. The image is a detail from the coffin of Nespawershepi, chief scribe of the Temple of Amun, from the Twenty-first Dynasty (c. 984 B.C.E.). *(Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY)*

between Nut and Geb. To help with this task, Shu created the Ogdoad, or Eight Infinite Ones, one pair to hold each of Nut's limbs.

Shu ruled Egypt as its second mythic king, after the sun god, Re. He was the creator of light and was sometimes called the father or begetter of the gods.

Shu was associated with life (*ankh*), change, and "eternal recurrence, the never-ending yet ever-changing cyclical aspects of the world." The space provided by Shu's existence was where life and activity took place, and the air that he provided permitted creatures to breathe and therefore to live. The wind was said to be his *ba,* a term encompassing a number of concepts including soul and reputation.

Later, Shu was represented in a number of gods, including Osiris and Horus.

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Simurgh

(Persian)

In the lore of Persia, which is present-day Iran, the *simurgh* was a gigantic, winged bird-creature with the tail of a peacock, the head of a dog, and the claws of a lion. It sometimes was shown with a human face.

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The simurgh was said to be so old that it had seen the world destroyed three times over. It had learned so much in its long life that it possessed the wisdom of all the ages. The simurgh was known to take children into its nest to nurse them or foster them. Its touch was said to heal all wounds. Its natural habitat was a place with plenty of water, although some accounts say that it nested in the Tree of Knowledge or in the Elburz Mountains.

The simurgh played a major role in the *Shah-nameh,* the epic poem about the legendary kings and heroes of Persia. When the hero Zal was born, his father was horrified to see that the baby had white hair. This was taken to be an ill omen. The baby was cast out by his father and rescued by the simurgh, who fostered Zal.

When Zal grew up to be a great warrior, the simurgh reunited him with his father and gave Zal a feather he could burn to call the great bird to him in an emergency. Years later, Zal's wife was in terrible labor. Zal burned the simurgh's feather, and the simurgh helped him deliver his son. The child grew up to be Rustam, the greatest hero in the *Shah-nameh.*

***See also:** Retelling: Shah-nameh.*

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Sinuhe, The Story of

(Egyptian)

The Story of Sinuhe is about the adventures and rise of an Egyptian official. It was most likely composed sometime after the death of King Senwosret I (1971–1928 B.C.E.).

The story opens as those in the Egyptian palace learn of the death of King Sehetipibre (Amenemhat I). Senwosret, the king's son, was traveling home from what is now Libya with an army and captives from the campaign. Sinuhe was traveling with them. Messengers arrived with news of Sehetipibre's death. Sinuhe overheard a conversation between other princes who were also on campaign. What they said is never revealed, but it inspired in Sinuhe such fear that he fled for his life.

With the aid of some Bedouins along the way, Sinuhe traveled to Syria. Once there, he was invited to live with Amunenshi, ruler of Upper Retjenu, present-day Syria. Amunenshi had heard of Sinuhe's reputation from other Egyptians and wanted to know why he had come to Syria.

Sinuhe explained the circumstances of his flight in half-truths, admitting that he did not really know what brought him to Syria, except that it was not his own guilt. Perhaps it was the plan of a god. He poetically praised Senwosret, the new king, as one who was strong in battle yet kind and loved by his people. Amunenshi gave Sinuhe his eldest daughter as a wife and granted him the rich agricultural land of Yaa.

Years passed, and Sinuhe fathered sons who grew into heroes. Sinuhe's home became the resting place for passing envoys. He guarded the borders, defeating hill tribes that threatened the lands of Syria.

Sinuhe Is Challenged

One day, a Syrian hero challenged Sinuhe. A discussion with Amunenshi about this incident made it clear that the people of Retjenu were resentful of Sinuhe, an outsider who had become so great in their land.

That night, Sinuhe prepared his weapons. The following day, the Retjenus gathered to witness the fight.

The battle opened with Sinuhe immediately gaining the Syrian's axe and javelins after successfully avoiding a volley of arrows. In a charge, the Syrian fell on one of Sinuhe's arrows. Sinuhe then finished the challenger off with the Syrian's own axe and praised the Egyptian war god, Montu. The cattle and everything else owned by the Syrian were now the

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property of Sinuhe, which made him exceptionally wealthy

But Sinuhe longed to return home to Egypt and live under the rule of his king, serving the queen and her children. Sinuhe, feeling the effects of old age, proclaimed that death was near and that he wished to be buried in Egypt.

King Senwosret heard of Sinuhe's longing and sent a letter stating that Sinuhe had done nothing wrong and need not have feared for his life in Egypt. Sinuhe's flight was not the result of the king's heart but rather of Sinuhe's. The king then invited Sinuhe to return to Egypt and promised him a rich burial.

Sinuhe responded with a letter in which he praised the king highly and admitted that, although his flight was his own fault, he still did not know the cause—the episode seems to have been a dream. Although he heard nothing that should have made him afraid, he did fear; it was as though a god had dragged him away.

Sinuhe Returns Home

Sinuhe made his eldest son the leader of his tribe, disposed of his possessions, and departed for Egypt. Eventually, he arrived at the Egyptian palace and was ushered into the presence of the king. Terror seized Sinuhe again, but the king ordered his courtiers to raise Sinuhe up.

The queen and royal children entered and were overjoyed to see Sinuhe again. The daughters, carrying instruments associated with priestesses, performed before their father, invoking the goddess Hathor and asking for mercy on behalf of Sinuhe. They attributed his flight to terror of the king.

The king appointed Sinuhe as a royal courtier and assigned him a new house. This place, which once belonged to another courtier, was rebuilt for Sinuhe and luxuriously appointed. The king also granted him a pyramid-tomb, mortuary priests, and land to support them. Sinuhe was even given a gilded statue and remained in the king's good graces until the day he died.

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See also: Fantasy.

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Sirens

(Greek)

In Greek and other mythologies, sirens were partly human creatures described as having irresistibly beautiful voices. In many cases, they used their lovely songs to lure sailors to their deaths.

In Greek mythology, the sirens (also called the seirenes) were a form of naiad, or sea nymph. They lived on a perilously rough and rocky island called Sirenum Scopuli and sang their songs to lure sailors to them. The ships would crash onto the island's rocks, and the sailors would drown or be slain by the sirens.

The sirens were the daughters of the Greek river deity, Achelous. There were said to be anywhere from two to eight sirens, depending on whether a Greek or a Roman was telling the tale. The eight Greek sirens' names are Thelxiepia, Molpe, Aglaophonos, Pisinoe, Ligeia, Leucsoia, Raidne, and Teles.

According to the Roman poet Ovid, the sirens were originally Persephone's friends. But they were changed into demonic creatures by the angry Demeter after they failed to stop Hades from stealing Persephone.

Two Greek heroes, Odysseus (in Roman myth, Ulysses) and Orpheus, had encounters with the sirens and survived. Odysseus, as recounted in Homer's *Odyssey* (likely written in eighth or ninth century B.C.E.), escaped by plugging up the ears of his crew with wax so that they were deaf to the sirens' songs. He had his men lash him to a mast so that he could hear the music without coming to harm. Once Odysseus became calm, his men knew they were safe, removed the wax from their ears, and untied him.

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A pen and ink drawing of a siren depicts her as a beautiful but dangerous woman. The illustration is by M.J. Engel and dates to the late nineteenth century. *(© Snark/Art Resource, NY)*

Orpheus was one of Jason's Argonauts, the band of heroes that accompanied Jason in his quest for the Golden Fleece. When their ship, the *Argo,* sailed past the island of the sirens, Orpheus, a master musician, played his music to drown out their voices. Some stories claim that the sirens were so frustrated over losing either Odysseus's ship or the *Argo* that they drowned themselves.

In Malaysian folklore, a similar story is attached to Gua Langsuir, a cave located on the island of Pulau Dayang Bunting. Three female demons would sing so provocatively that sailors would drown trying to reach them. Those sailors who were unfortunate enough to actually reach the female demons would then be tortured to death.

One day, a deaf fisherman resisted the song of these demons, as he was unable to hear them. The sirens were alarmed, thinking that humans had found a way to resist them. They fled and were never seen in mortal lands again. Whether or not there is a link between the Greek and Malaysian traditions has not been fully ascertained.

In modern usage, a seductive but dangerous woman is often called a siren. The phrase *siren song* means something with a dangerous but irresistible appeal.

See also: Lorelei; Mermaids.

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Sius

(Hittite)

Sius was the Hittite sun god and was sometimes additionally listed as king of the gods. He was a god of justice and an ally of Teshub, the storm god.

It was Sius who first noticed the giant Ullikummi in the sea and warned Teshub, refusing to eat until he had finished delivering his message.

In another myth, Teshub's son, Telepinu, disappeared, which caused a famine. Sius arranged a feast, but his efforts could not alleviate the people's hunger. At Teshub's request, Sius dispatched an eagle to search for Telepinu, but the bird was unsuccessful. Finally, a bee discovered Telepinu. Sius had the people perform a ritual, presumably one of thanksgiving and magical significance.

In another version of this missing-god myth, Sius was missing. He was kidnapped by the sea god, who caught him in a net as he sank below the horizon. During Sius's absence, Hahhimas (frost) took hold. Sius was rescued by Telepinu.

Ira Spar

See also: Anu; Zeus.

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Skald

(Norse)

Skald is the Old Icelandic or Old Norse word meaning "bard" or "poet." These were the singers and storytellers of the Viking era and the Scandinavian poets of the Middle Ages.

Unlike European troubadours and minstrels, most skalds did not wander the countryside. They were members of royal or noble households who used their creations to honor their patrons and their patrons' ancestors.

The major era of the skalds was between 900 and 1200 C.E. They performed across the land in Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and the various other Viking settlements that were found at that time throughout Europe.

Unfortunately, many of the early skalds' creations were oral and have therefore been lost. Some later skaldic poetry survived as part of the medieval Icelandic sagas of gods and heroes, which were written down and later translated.

Skaldic poetry was very complex. It included specific designs of alliteration, as in *Harold's hammer,* and syllables ending in the same consonant, as in *blunt* and *flat*.

Skaldic poetry also used a type of metaphorical compound phrase called a *kenning,* a word that comes from the Old Norse *kenna,* meaning "to know." A *storm of swords,* for example, could be a kenning for *battle*. Kenning as a style was also used in Anglo-Saxon works such as *Beowulf.*

See also: Griots/Griottes/Jelis; Jongleurs; Minnesang/Minnesingers; Troubadors.

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Skulls

Skulls that let out horrible screams, talk, or refuse to talk at unexpected or dangerous moments are eerie subjects of many ghost tales and horror stories. Some skulls also cause poltergeist activity. The oldest such tales go back to the sixteenth century.

Screaming skulls are unique to England. Stories of such skulls have been recorded in many counties, including Cumbria, Derbyshire, Dorset, Lancashire, Somerset, Suffolk, Sussex, and Yorkshire.

Screaming Skull Tales

Perhaps the most famous of the screaming skulls was at Bettiscombe Manor in Dorset. The tradition hints that it was the skull of a servant whose dying wish was to have his body returned home to the West Indies. The master of the house, Azariah Pinney, refused to grant his servant's wish, and the servant was buried in the local churchyard.

Soon after the servant's burial, terrible screams issued from the grave, and the house was plagued by poltergeist activity. When the family could take no more of this, they disinterred the skeleton and brought it into the manor. The screams and weird activity ceased.

The skeleton was lost over the centuries, leaving only the skull. One owner is said to have thrown the skull into a nearby pond, only to be plagued by unearthly screams all night. He quickly retrieved the skull and restored it to its pride of place. In another story, an owner hastily buried the skull. In the morning, he was horrified to find that the skull had dug itself out and sat waiting for him to return it to the house.

The skull was finally examined in 1963 by the archaeologist Michael Pinney, who found that it was about 2,000 years old and probably female. Evidently, it no longer screams.

Another skull, called Dickie, "lived" at Tunstead farm in the nineteenth century. It was supposedly the skull of a woman who was said

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to have been murdered in the house, expressing with her dying breath the desire to stay there forever. Over the years, the skeleton was lost and only the skull remained. The skull was stolen once, but it made so much noise that the thieves hastily returned it. Another story about this skull claimed that it was the remains of Ned Dixon-Dickie, who was murdered at the farm by his cousin.

The skull at Burton Agnes Hall was thought to reside behind one of the walls where it had been bricked up and forgotten about years before. It was said to have belonged to one of three sisters who lived in the Elizabethan era. She had been murdered, and her sisters had buried her. Afterward, the sisters learned from its screams that her skull wanted to remain in the house. The skull was disinterred and placed in the hall.

All went well, until a servant wrapped the skull in a cloth and threw it on the back of a wagon. What happened was dramatic: The horses reared in fear and the hall shook, causing pictures to fall off the walls, until the skull was replaced. After this incident, the skull was placed in a niche in the wall, which was safely sealed up.

Talking Skulls

Talking skull tales originate from West Africa. In the basic tale, a traveler finds a skull by the side of the road and says, "I wonder what brought you here." To his surprise, the skull answers, "Talking brought me here."

The man rushes off to the chief to tell him about this amazing skull. The chief follows him to the skull, which says nothing, no matter how the traveler cajoles it. The furious chief has the traveler beheaded. Now, there are two skulls. The new one says to the first, "Talking brought me here."

There are variants of this tale, in which the object can be a frog, a dog, or even a chair, and the end result is failure for the man rather than death.

See also: Motifs.

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Slavic Mythology

There are few complete written records documenting Slavic pagan beliefs. Research into the Slavic pre-Christian belief system is complicated, because the Slavic nobility and peasantry worshipped separate deities. In addition, Christian beliefs eventually were integrated into the myths, which further complicates the task of determining the original deities and their myths.

The names and attributes of some of the major and minor deities are known, however. They are presented here to serve as springboards for further research by storytellers and scholars.

Major Deities

- Byelabog: the deity of light, of all goodness and happiness. His name means "white god" and his prime adversary is Chernabog, the black god. Some scholars believe that rather than representing the forces of good and evil, Byelabog may have been the deity of the warm and fertile months of the year, while Chernabog was the ruler of the dark months of winter. Their participation in the battle between light and darkness as good and evil may be a later, Christianized concept.
- Dazhdebog: god of gifts or blessings.
- Khors: a seemingly contradictory character described as the god of the Sun, chaos, and darkness.
- Kupalo: a god of vegetation and the center of the celebration called Kupala.

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The festival was timed to midsummer night, which marked the summer solstice and the height of the growing season. Loosely translated, the word *kupala* means bathed, and ritual bathing was part of the celebration. The coming of Christianity did not completely erase the worship of Kupalo, as he became Ivan Kupalo, or John the Bather, better known as John the Baptist. Kupala is still celebrated as "the merriest, sexiest night."

- Mokosh: the mother goddess and, in some traditions, the wife of Perun. In pagan Russia, oaths sworn in her name were said to be unbreakable.
- Perun: god of thunder and lightning, sometimes portrayed as the chief of the Slavic gods. Generally pictured as a man with silver hair and a golden mustache, Perun fights against demonic forces with bolts of lightning that are said to become stones (or Neolithic stone tools) on Earth.
- Rod: possibly the most ancient of the Slavic deities and probably a peasant's deity. His name means "kin," and he is rarely mentioned except in the earliest hymns. He is credited with the creation of the universe and founding divine law, which is called *pravda,* or truth.
- Rozhenitsa: the birth-giver, goddess of fertility or childbirth.
- Stribog: god of the wind, cold, and conflicts.
- Svantavit: god of war, described as a protective warrior. He was portrayed as a four-headed man, able to face the four directions simultaneously so that no enemy could steal up on him. He carried a sword and spear, and his sacred bird was the eagle.
- Svarog: god of fire and patron of smiths. He also may have been a patron of artists and craftsmen. Svarog is the father of Dazhdebog.
- Veles (also Volos): deity of cattle and commerce. He may have been a trickster figure like the Greek god Hermes.
- Yarilo (also Jarilo or Yaro): god of the springtime and spring fertility. He is portrayed as a young man in white, with a wheat wreath on his head, a wheat sheaf in his right hand, and a human head in his left.

Minor Deities and Supernatural Beings

- Baba Yaya: a magical hag in Russian folklore. She was said to live in a hut that stood on giant chicken legs and to travel in a mortar and pestle propelled by a broom. Her hut was surrounded by stakes topped with human skulls.
- *Bannik*: the spirit of the bathhouse in Russian and Ukrainian folklore.
- *Domovoi*: the spirit of the household in Russian and Ukrainian folklore.
- *Leshy*: shape-shifting spirit and trickster of the forest.
- *Rusalka*: a water spirit; often thought to be the ghost of a murdered or betrayed woman.
- Simargl: a winged dog who protected seed and new crops. His name is Persian with a Slavic ending, and he is probably not a native mythic being but a form of the Persian dog-headed, winged creature called Simurgh.

See also: Baba Yaga; Bogatyr/Bogatyri; *Retelling: Koschei the Deathless*.

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Sleepers, Enchanted

The fairy tale of Sleeping Beauty tells of perhaps the most familiar magical sleeper. But there are many other such characters, both divine and mortal, found in world folklore.

Heroic Sleepers

At Lake Lucerne in Switzerland, three sleeping members of the Tell family (descendants of William Tell) awaited the hour when their country would need to be delivered from its oppressors. The medieval emperor Charlemagne reposed in Untersberg Mountain, sword in hand, waiting for the coming of the Antichrist. Olger Danske, one of Charlemagne's companions, similarly dreamed away his time in Avalon, the island of Arthurian legend.

The German hero Siegfried, pierced by the thorn of winter, slept until he was called forth to fight. And on a lofty mountain in the German region of Thuringia, the great Emperor Frederic Barbarossa slumbered with his knights around him. He would waken when the time came for him to sally forth and raise Germany to the first rank among the kingdoms of the world. The latter story is also told of the Viking leader Olaf Tryggvesson, of Don Sebastian of Portugal, and of the Moorish King Boabdil.

Brunhilde, the Valkyrie in the Norse *Völsunga Saga* was protected by the god Odin. He placed her in a castle or on a high mountain that was surrounded by a fiery barrier. Then, she was put into a deep, magical sleep until a sufficiently brave hero rescued her.

Religious Sleepers

The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus took refuge in a cave from the persecutions of the heathen Decius. They slept 164 years and awoke to find a Christian emperor on the throne.

The Saxony monk of Hildesheim doubted the concept that God perceived a period of a thousand years as a single day. The monk listened for three minutes, enthralled by the singing of a bird in the forest. On waking from

Sleeping Beauty and all the royal court are held by the wicked fairy's sleep spell. They will not wake until the gallant prince comes, kisses Sleeping Beauty, and breaks the spell. This illustration dates to about 1812. *(Hulton Archive/Stringer/Getty Images)*

his reverie, he discovered that a thousand years had flown by.

To the same family of legends belongs the notion that St. John sleeps at Ephesus until the last days of the world.

Among the Algonquin people of North America, the sun god Michabo is said to sleep through the winter months. At the time of the falling leaves, he fills his great pipe and smokes, forming the blue clouds that gently float over the landscape and filling the air with the haze of Indian summer.

Other Sleepers

There are a number of magical sleepers who cannot be categorized. These include the Arthurian tale of the enchanter Merlin, who was spellbound by Vivien; the story of the Cretan philosopher Epimenides, who dozed away fifty-seven years in a cave; the Greek shepherd Endymion, who preserved his freshness in a perennial slumber; and Rip Van Winkle, who took a twenty-year nap in New York's Catskill Mountains.

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In a related tale type, a man discovers the magical sleepers and is asked by one of them if it is time to wake. He nervously replies no, and the magical sleep continues.

See also: *Saga of the Volsungs;* Tale Types.

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Sleepers, Heroic

(Western European)

A common Western European tale type is that of the heroic sleepers who are discovered by a curious explorer or a treasure hunter. When the explorer or hunter enters, one of the sleepers asks if it is time to wake and defend the realm. When the intruder answers no, the heroic sleepers return to their enchanted slumber.

This tale is tied to the common belief that a hero does not die, but lies in enchanted sleep until his people need him.

Sweden

A peasant with a load of rye to sell came at twilight to Alborg, where he discovered a grand mansion. "Maybe I can sell my rye here," he thought, and knocked on the door.

The door swung open, and the peasant entered. He found himself in a grand hall. In the middle of the floor stood a large table, and upon the table lay twelve golden helmets. Scattered around the room, deep in slumber, were twelve knights in glittering armor.

The peasant went on and came to a large stable, where he found twelve magnificent steeds bedecked with golden trappings and silver shoes on their hooves. He picked up one of the golden bridles to see it more closely. But as soon as he touched it, he heard a voice cry out, "Is it time now?" and an answer, "No, not yet!"

The peasant hurried out in fright. Once outside, he found that he had gone into a mountain instead of a mansion. What he had witnessed were the twelve knights who slept there until the country was in some great danger. Once their services were required, they would awaken to help Sweden defend herself against foreign enemies.

England and Wales

A Welshman carrying a hazel staff as a walking stick was met by an English magician. The magician told the Welshman about a great treasure hidden under the spot where he had cut his hazel staff. The magician then said that if the Welshman could lead him to that spot, he could have the treasure.

Going together to Craig-y-Dinas, the Welshman pointed out the spot. When the two men dug down, they found a broad, flat stone covering the entrance to a large cavern. They both entered. In the middle of the passage hung a bell that the magician warned the Welshman not to touch.

They reached the wide lower part of the cave and found many thousands of warriors fast asleep in a large circle. Each one was clad in bright armor. Swords, shields, and other weapons lay nearby, ready to be taken up in an instant whenever the bell should ring and awaken them. All the arms were so highly polished and bright that they lit up the cavern like ten thousand flames. Among the warriors was one who was greatly distinguished from the rest by his arms and armor, with a crown of gold set with precious stones at his side.

In the midst of this circle of warriors, the two intruders saw two large heaps, one of gold, the other of silver. The magician told the Welshman that he might take as much as he could carry away, but that he was not to take from both the heaps. The Welshman loaded himself with gold. The magician took none, saying that he did not want it, that gold

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was of no use to those who wanted knowledge.

On their way out, the magician again warned the Welshman not to touch the bell. If by some mischance he did, one or more of the warriors would awake, lift up his head, and ask, "Is it day?" Were that to happen, the Welshman was to answer without hesitation, "No, sleep thou on," and the warriors would sleep on.

On their way up, however, the Welshman, overloaded with gold, was not able to pass the bell without touching it. It rang, and one of the warriors raised up his head and asked, "Is it day?"

"No," answered the Welshman promptly, "it is not; sleep thou on." And so they left the cave, laid down the stone over its entrance, and covered it over once more.

The magician warned the Welshman to be careful with his treasure. But if he should need more, he could return if he was wary. If he should touch the bell, he must remember to give the proper answer.

He also said that the distinguished person they had seen was King Arthur. The others were his knights, who lay asleep with their arms ready at hand for the dawn of that day when the black eagle and the golden eagle should go to war. Then, the bell would ring loudly, and the warriors would awake, take up their arms, and destroy all the enemies of the Welsh. And the land would be blessed with peace for as long as the world endured.

The time came when the Welshman's treasure was all spent. He returned to the cave and, as before, took as much gold as he could carry. As he left, he touched the bell and it rang. A warrior lifted up his head and asked if it was day. But the Welshman, who had covetously overloaded himself, was quite out of breath and laboring under his burden. He was struck with terror and was unable to give the necessary answer.

Some of the warriors got up, took the gold away from the Welshman, and beat him dreadfully. They threw him out and drew the stone after them over the mouth of the cave. The Welshman never recovered from the beating. He lived the remainder of his life disabled and very poor. He often returned with some of his friends to Craig-y-Dinas, but they could never find the entrance to the cave, though they dug over every inch of the hill.

Scotland

Tradition has asserted that King Arthur, his queen, Guinevere, his court of lords and ladies, and his hounds lie enchanted in a cave or in a hall below the Castle of Sewingshields. There, they will remain until someone blows a bugle that lies on a table near the entrance of the hall and, with the legendary sword of the stone, cuts a garter that is placed beside it.

No one knew where the entrance to this enchanted hall was until a farmer sat knitting at the castle ruins. He dropped his work in a rush of briars and nettles. The farmer tried to retrieve his knitting, broke through the thorny plants, and arrived in a deep subterranean passage. The farmer knew he had found the entrance to King Arthur's hall.

Passing through into a vaulted passageway, the farmer followed a dim, distant light until it grew brighter. All at once, he found himself in a vast hall. At the center was a fire that blazed without fuel. The firelight revealed carved walls and a fretted roof, and the monarch and his queen and court reposing on thrones and costly couches. On the floor, lay the faithful pack of hounds and, on a table before the fire, was the spell-dispelling horn, sword, and garter.

The farmer forgot the proper order of things. He reverently but firmly grasped the sword. As he drew the sword from its rusty scabbard, cutting the garter in the process, the eyes of the monarch and his courtiers began to open. Then the king exclaimed:

O woe betide that evil day
On which the witless wight was born,
Who drew the sword—the garter cut,
But never blew the bugle horn.

With that, Arthur and his court sank back into slumber.

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None of the tales of this type end with the sleepers waking to save the land.

See also: Tale Types.

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Sleipnir

(Norse)

Sleipnir was the swift, eight-legged horse that belonged to Odin, head of the Norse pantheon.

Sleipnir's story took place at Asgard, which was home of the Aesir, the principal race of Norse gods. The Aesir were in a battle with the rival gods, the Vanir, and the giants. During the battle, the wall that enclosed Asgard had been destroyed. This left the Aesir vulnerable to an attack by their primary enemy, the giants. The Aesir did not have either the magical skills or engineering abilities necessary to repair the wall.

A stonemason named Blast appeared at Asgard and offered to rebuild the wall. In return, Blast wanted the beautiful Freya for his wife, as well as possession of the Sun and the Moon. These terms were totally unacceptable to the gods.

Loki, the cunning one, came up with a plan to outwit the mason and get the wall built for free. The gods listened to him. They announced that they would agree to Blast's terms only if he completed the work within six months.

Blast agreed, and he set to work with his mighty stallion, Svadlifari. The work went far more rapidly than the gods had expected. They grew worried. What if Blast did finish the wall within the agreed upon time? The gods would have to meet his outrageous demands. Odin grew so angry that he threatened to kill Loki if the wall was finished on time.

Loki was not concerned. Since it was the mighty Svadlifari who was doing all the heavy work, Loki took the form of a sexy young mare and lured Svadlifari away. By the time the stallion returned, it was too late—the deadline had passed. The furious Blast revealed himself as a giant, and Thor promptly slew him with one swing of his hammer.

Loki disappeared for almost a year. But at last, he returned accompanied by a gray colt with eight legs that could travel as easily through the air as it could over land and water. Loki gave the colt, Sleipnir, to Odin. Sleipnir was the foal of Loki in his mare form and the stallion Svadlifari.

See also: Norse Mythology; Odin/Odhinn.

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Snakes

Snakes hold a place of importance in folklore and mythology from around the world. A snake's ability to shed its skin has made it a symbol of immortality in stories such as the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. This also may be the reason that snakes appear as deities or representations of rebirth or the return to youth in stories from many cultures.

Snakes as Symbols

Images of intertwined snakes symbolized healing and fertility in ancient Babylon. One of the oldest mystical symbols in the world is the Ouroboros, literally "tail-devourer," which dates to ancient Egypt. The Ouroboros is the symbol of perfection, the endless cycle of being. It usually is pictured as a serpent

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with its tail in its mouth, forming a perfect circle.

The Greek god of medicine, Asclepios, is depicted holding a caduceus, which is a staff with two intertwined serpents coiled around it. According to the myth, he discovered medicine by watching a snake use herbs to heal or, in some versions, to resurrect another snake. Since the sixteenth century, the caduceus has been a symbol for various medical organizations.

Snakes as Symbols of Divinity

Snakes appear as deities in many ancient cultures. The Aztec god Quetzalcoatl, the feathered, or plumed, serpent, whose Mayan counterpart to Quetzalcoatl is Kulkulcan, is a powerful god of civilization, credited with providing corn, the arts, and science to humankind.

Ancient Egyptians worshipped Renenutet, a cobra goddess associated with fertility and the protection of children and the pharaoh. The Egyptians also idolized Nehebkau, a snake deity that guarded the entrance to the underworld, protected the pharaoh after death, and traveled with the sun god, Re, during his nightly journey through the underworld.

In Australian aboriginal culture, Wollunqua is the Rainbow Snake, a giant snake connected with the rainbow as well as with Creation itself. Eingana is an aboriginal snake goddess and mother goddess who made the land, the water, and all living things.

In Hindu mythology, *nagas* are a race of demigod serpent-people that are half human and half snake. Some African cultures look upon rock pythons as sacred and consider the killing of one to be a serious crime.

Snakes as Symbols of Evil

In the Old Testament, a serpent tempted Eve to taste the forbidden fruit. In Greek mythology, one of the god Apollo's earliest deeds was the slaying of the deadly serpent Python.

The goddess Hera, who hated the infant Hercules, sent two serpents to destroy him in his cradle, but Hercules triumphed, strangling them. Later, Hercules slew the Hydra, a terrible serpent with nine heads.

Legendary Snake Creatures

Sea serpents are mythological and legendary marine animals that traditionally resemble enormous snakes. Not all sea serpents are hostile. In Melanesian mythology, Amam was a huge snake that lived in the ocean. Anyone accidentally sailing into the snake became disoriented in the darkness and could be led out again only by a willing bird.

In Norse mythology, the Midgard serpent encircled the world. The god Thor, while out fishing, caught what he thought was an enormous fish, but the powerful god of thunder had actually hooked a coil of the Midgard serpent.

Another monstrous snake in Norse mythology was Nidhogg, or Tearer of Corpses. Nidhogg forever gnawed on the roots of the World Tree, Yggdrasil, in an attempt to destroy it.

Still other malevolent snake monsters included the Greek king of snakes, the basilisk or cockatrice, which was so poisonous that it could kill with a glance. In Roman times, Pliny the Elder described this creature simply as a snake with a small golden crown.

By the Middle Ages, the basilisk had received its own mythology. It had become a rooster-headed or sometimes human-headed snake. It could come only from a round egg laid by a seven-year-old rooster and hatched by a toad. It caused death with a single glance. The only way to kill a basilisk was to hold a mirror up to it so that its own gaze would slay it.

A less perilous but still monstrous snake was the Greek Amphisbaena. It had a head at either end of its body and eyes that glowed with their own light. Its name means "goes both ways." If it was cut in half, the halves would join again.

Snakes in Folklore

In world folklore, there is a recurring theme of the snake or serpent husband. In this tale type, the heroine marries, either knowingly or unwittingly, a snake. In most versions, the snake

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husband turns out to be a human under an enchantment that is broken by the heroine.

Folk beliefs about snakes abound in Western cultures. Some people still believe that snakes charm their prey, swallow their young for protection, poison people with their breath, roll like hoops, and suck milk from cows. Following are just a few of the multitude of snake superstitions to be found in North America and Great Britain:

- A hair from a horse's tail placed in a barrel of rainwater becomes a living snake.
- A rattlesnake's rattle carried as an amulet brings good luck.
- A rattlesnake will never strike a small child.
- A snake crawling into your tent on the battleground means enemies are near.
- A snake killed is an enemy conquered.
- A snake will not die until sundown.
- A snake will swallow her young in times of danger; when the danger is over, the baby snakes will crawl out again.

Snakes and Modern Western Culture

In Western culture, snakes either personify evil or represent evil that is to be overcome. The biblical tale of the Garden of Eden and the serpent's role in Adam and Eve's fall from grace is the basis for this antisnake bias. In the Appalachian Mountains, as well as in some other regions, Christians handle venomous snakes as part of ritual ceremonies, relying on faith to protect them from bites. There are no snakes in Ireland, legend crediting Saint Patrick with casting them out.

Recently, the snake has appeared in several urban legends and children's rhymes. One urban tale, collected throughout North America and popular even though disproved, is of a child on an amusement park ride who complains about bites or stings. The cause turns out to be an infestation of poisonous snakes that live in the ride.

In another tale, a woman feels pain in her neck after wearing a coat for the first time. Sure enough, she has a snakebite. A snake had accidentally been sewn into the coat's lining.

This children's jump-rope rhyme combines Cinderella with snakes:

Cinderella, dressed in yella,
Went upstairs to kiss her fella,
Made a mistake,
Kissed a snake.
How many doctors did it take?

Storytellers deal with snakes as a subject in many ways. Though much modern Western lore casts the snake in a negative light, the legends and beliefs of many cultures testify that serpents should not always be said to be evil.

See also: Nagas.

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Snegurochka/Snowmaiden

(Russian)

Snegurochka, or the Snowmaiden, is a Russian folk being, a miraculous young woman who comes to life from cold snow.

Snegurochka plays different roles in three Russian stories: a folktale; a story that is part of modern Russian Christmas tradition; and a nineteenth-century opera titled *Snegurochka* (*The Snow Maiden*) by Russian composer Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov. The latter is based on a play by Aleksandr Nikolayevich Ostrovsky. All three versions are of interest to storytellers.

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A childless couple longed for a baby and dreamed of watching their child playing in the snow. One winter's day, they built a snow maiden, making her as realistic as possible. To their astonishment, the snow maiden smiled at them and came to life. They called her Snegurochka.

Snegurochka grew to be a beautiful young woman, pale and cool skinned. As the weather grew warm, she refused to go outside and hid in the darkest corners of the house. When summer came, she became even more withdrawn. Then one day, her friends asked her to join them on a trip into the woods to pick berries.

Snegurochka did not wish to go, but her parents persuaded her. As night fell, the other girls sat by a fire, but Snegurochka refused to join them. At last, she grew lonely and moved toward the fire. In just a few moments, she melted away.

In modern Russia, as though the people are reluctant to let Snegurochka melt away, Christmas tradition often portrays a cheerful snow maiden. She is the assistant to Grandfather Frost, the Russian equivalent of Santa Claus.

Ostrovsky's play and Rimsky-Korsakov's opera include elements of traditional Russian lore. In this version, Snegurochka is the daughter of Frost and Spring. Refusing to listen to the warnings of her parents, she goes to seek the company of mortals.

Snegurochka is drawn to the songs of Lel, a shepherd, but he shows no interest in her. Lel is in love with a villager woman, Kupava, who is engaged to another man, Mizguir. Mizguir is so smitten with Snegurochka that she receives the power of human love. It melts her almost instantly, and her death brings the return of springtime.

See also: Operas and Their Stories; Slavic Mythology.

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Song of Igor's Campaign

(Russian)

The epic poem *Song of Igor's Campaign* is one of the earliest known pieces of Russian literature, probably composed around 1187 C.E. The poem relates the defeat of Prince Igor by the nomadic Kumans.

The poem deals with complex themes of prophecy and magic. The consistent use of these themes and the use of symbols that are repeated in different sections have led scholars to the conclusion that this was the work of a single author, rather than an amalgamation of separate traditions assembled at a later date.

Igor set out from Novgorod-Seversk on August 23, 1185, to stop the Kuman raids on Kievan Russia. The three-day battle was a disaster. Igor, his son, and two other princes were captured, and their armies were largely annihilated.

Igor's son, Vladimir, married the daughter of the Kuman ruler who had held him captive. Vladimir was sent home in 1187 with his wife and child. The ever-noble Igor refused to break his vow not to flee from captivity. Only when he was reminded of his prior vow to protect his people did Igor make his escape.

This poem was unknown until a copy was found in 1790 by Count Aleskey Musin-Pushkin. He realized that one of the manuscripts was a completely unknown piece of early Russian literature.

Musin-Pushkin's copy was not an original, but rather a transcription, dating from the sixteenth century. Whoever had made the transcription was not familiar with many twelfth-century words and phrases, and consequently a number of mistakes had been introduced. Further errors were added to the text when Musin-Pushkin published an edition of the poem in 1800. Musin-Pushkin and his assistant inserted modern punctuation, misinterpreted some of the words, and clumsily chopped the manuscript into paragraphs.

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The original copy purchased by Musin-Pushkin was destroyed in a fire in 1812, but copies of the 1800 publication still exist today. This edition consists of approximately 860 lines, a total of 3,000 words, and is divided into five parts: Exordium, Narration, Conjuration, Liberation, and Epilogue.

The *Song of Igor's Campaign* was used as source material by the Russian composer Aleksandr Borodin for his opera *Prince Igor.* The work premiered in 1887, after the composer's death.

See also: Culture Heroes; Epics.

Source

Nabokov, Vladimir, trans. *The Song of Igor's Campaign: An Epic of the Twelfth Century.* New York: Vintage Books, 1960.

Song of Roland

(French)

The *Song of Roland* is one of the earliest French poems known as *chansons de geste,* or songs of (heroic) deeds. Composed sometime during the late eleventh century, *Song of Roland* is part of the cycle of tales that focus on the eighth-century Emperor Charlemagne and his peers, or knights.

While the poem's subject matter is consistent with other *chansons de geste,* it lacks the elements of magic that appear in other tales. The *Song of Roland* tells of the betrayal of the noble knight Roland by the false knight Ganelon. Ganelon is secretly allied with the enemy Saracens, the medieval Christian name for Muslims. Roland and his entourage were slaughtered in the Pyrenees mountain valley of Roncesvaux.

The heart of the poem, the ambush of Roland and his retinue, is based on a historical event of August 15, 778 C.E. The rear guard of Charlemagne's army, led by Count Hrodland, was annihilated by the Basques in the Pyrenees. However, by the time the poem was written three centuries later, little of the actual history was retained. The Basques had become Saracens, Charlemagne, who was thirty-six in 778 C.E., is portrayed as an old man in the *Song of Roland,* and his one-season expedition became a war of seven years.

The most central change that was made between the historical event and the poem was to the main character, who in history was Hrodland, the Count of the Marches of Brittany. The count was a vassal of the emperor but was not related to him. In the *Song of Roland,* Hrodland is transformed into Roland, Charlemagne's nephew. Roland is also given a boon companion, the knight Oliver, and a fiancée, Alda.

While Roland is depicted as a superior warrior, he is not given any superheroic qualities. He remains very human, with a fatal flaw—pride. It is pride that keeps Roland from blowing the horn that will summon additional troops. In the end, despite the treachery of Ganelon, it is Roland's pride and heedless recklessness that ultimately cause his own death and the demise of the rest of the rear guard.

The poem is composed of about 4,000 lines divided into 298 irregular stanzas called *laisses.* Most lines have ten syllables and are bound together by assonance; that is, vowels at the end of the line are often not identical but only similar in sound. The poem flows quickly, with only glimpses of setting or character provided—a view of the mountains, or a brief show of anger—before the story moves on.

No one is certain who wrote the *Song of Roland,* although the last line mentions the name Turoldus. The vagueness in original language could indicate that Turoldus was either the author or merely the transcriber. The poem was written to be performed rather than read, and would have been accompanied by music. The abbreviation "AOI" appears in the margins of the text and remains a mystery, but some speculate that it is an instruction for the musicians.

Because the *Song of Roland* was written during the time of the First Crusade, it is often considered to be a kind of early propaganda, designed to encourage Christians to take up arms against the Muslims.

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See also: Culture Heroes; Epics; *Rolandslied*.

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Sorcerer's Apprentice

The world tale of the sorcerer's apprentice has been told by almost every culture in Europe, the Near East, and Asia, wherever the concept of a master and an apprentice exists. A lazy or egotistical apprentice learns the hard way that he is not yet a master himself.

The basic story starts with the master sorcerer heading out for some unspecified reason and leaving his apprentice with chores to do. The chores usually include refilling a large tank with water. The apprentice soon grows weary of the tedious task of lugging bucket after heavy bucket. He either knows a spell (or at least thinks he does), or uses his master's book of magic to find one. He either enchants an inanimate object, such as a broomstick, or summons a demon to do the job for him while he rests.

But the apprentice is not as clever as he thinks, because he cannot stop the object or demon from bringing more and more water. Soon, the place is flooded, and the apprentice is in danger of drowning. Nothing the increasingly frantic apprentice does will stop the water bringer. When a magic book is involved in the story, the apprentice grabs the heavy tome and desperately holds it up to keep it safe from the water until his arms ache.

In all versions, the sorcerer returns just in time, easily breaks the spell, and sets everything to rights. In most versions, he forgives the apprentice, since the scare was punishment enough.

This story has inspired storytellers, poets, and composers. In 1775, German poet and playwright Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote his version as a ballad told from the point of view of the apprentice. In 1898, French composer Paul Dukas composed a tone poem, *L'apprenti sorcier* (*The Sorcerer's Apprentice*). This piece was used in the Walt Disney animated film *Fantasia* (1940), in which Mickey Mouse played the role of the apprentice.

See also: Tale Types; *Retelling: The Sorcerer's Apprentice*.

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Sphinx

(Egyptian and Greek)

In ancient Egyptian mythology, the sphinx was either a male figure or a man-headed lion that was sometimes winged. The Greek Sphinx was a winged female monster.

The Egyptian sphinx was a statue that generally represented a pharaoh, possibly in its aspect as sun god. The most famous of these Egyptian sphinxes is the Great Sphinx of Gizeh, located near the pyramids. This is believed to be a symbolic representation of Pharaoh Kahfra, or Chephren, and may date to the time of the fourth dynasty (2723–2563 B.C.E.), although the date is still a subject of debate.

The word *sphinx* is Greek, and it is related to the word *sphingo,* to strangle, from when the Greeks visited Egypt in later centuries. Whether or not this was because these figures reminded the Greeks of their own mythic Sphinx, or whether the Greek Sphinx is derived from these figures is unknown.

Regardless of its origin, the Greek Sphinx bears almost no resemblance to the Egyptian

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This ivory sphinx from Arslan Tash in Syria dates to the second half of the ninth century B.C.E. The figure's body and ornaments are Egyptian, but the pose and face are Near Eastern. *(© Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)*

figures. The Greek Sphinx is female, the monstrous offspring of Typhon and Echidna. She is sometimes described as being a woman-headed winged lion and sometimes as being a woman to the waist, with the rest of her body that of a winged lion with a snake's tail.

The Greek Sphinx sat on a high rock near Thebes. She posed a riddle to all who passed, slaying anyone who could not answer the riddle.

Oedipus happened to pass that way, and the Sphinx asked him, "What animal is that which in the morning goes on four feet, at noon on two, and in the evening upon three?"

Oedipus found the answer. "Man," he said, "who in childhood creeps on hands and knees, in manhood walks erect, and in old age with the aid of a staff."

The Sphinx was so mortified at the solving of her riddle that she cast herself down from the rock and perished.

See also: Oedipus.

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Squonk

(American)

The squonk is an unhappy and unlikely folklore creature invented by nineteenth-century immigrants to the United States. The squonk is wholly American, with no known counterpart in Europe, Africa, or Asia.

Native to the once-abundant hemlock forests of Pennsylvania, the squonk has been described as a very small, very shy, and very ugly animal. Its loose skin is covered with moles and warts.

Sadly, squonks are all too aware of their ugliness. As a result, they are unhappy creatures that weep all the time and try to avoid being seen. Anyone trying to hunt a squonk must enter a hemlock forest and follow the trail of tears. It is advised to wait for very frosty nights when the squonk's tears freeze and sparkle in the moonlight and the squonk is unable to move around quickly. Careful squonk hunters actually can hear their prey weeping under the hemlock trees.

Catching and holding a squonk is said to be difficult. One man thought he had captured a squonk after he lured it into a sack by mimicking its cry. On the way home, the hunter's burden lightened, and the sobbing ceased. When he opened the sack, there were only tears and bubbles inside. The explanation for this is that when a squonk is captured, it sobs in despair and shame so powerfully that it dissolves, leaving only tears. This gives the squonk its pseudo-scientific Latin name of *lachrimacorpus dissolvens,* meaning "body dissolves into tears."

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The squonk has entered popular culture in music and theater. In 1974, the folk-rock group Steely Dan released a song titled, "Any Major Dude Will Tell You," which features a couplet about the squonk: "Have you ever seen a squonk's tears? Well, look at mine. / People on the street have all seen better times."

In 1976, the band Genesis released the album *A Trick of the Tail,* which contained the song "Squonk." This song is a retelling of the story of a Mr. Wentling, squonk hunter, and is clearly an allegory on the human condition. In the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, area, a local performing arts troupe calls itself the Squonk Opera.

See also: Tall Tales.

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Standing Stones

(Western European)

Standing stones are ancient monoliths that generally date to the first millennium B.C.E. These massive stone structures were somehow shaped and placed in the landscape of Western Europe, particularly in Britain, Ireland, and Breton France. Often, the stones are placed in a circle.

Probably because of uncertainty about their origin or original purpose, a great many folktales exist about the standing stones. The folktales tell of transformed humans or giants that are able to walk or that stand in defense of the land or as punishment for some sin. The stones in several of the circles are said to be uncountable.

Stonehenge

Stonehenge, in the county of Wiltshire, England, is perhaps the most familiar of all groups of standing stones. According to archaeological evidence, construction probably was begun about 2400 B.C.E. and completed as many as a thousand years later.

The medieval writer Geoffrey of Monmouth added a fantastic element to the history of the monument. He wrote that the stones were brought from Africa to Ireland by giants and that the wizard Merlin used magic to bring the stones to England and build Stonehenge.

Christian folklore added a new variation, claiming that it was the devil, not Merlin, who had built Stonehenge, transporting the stones by magic from Ireland. Then, the devil bet the people of nearby Amesbury that they could not accurately count the stones. But a friar tricked the devil with the answer, "More than can be counted."

The enraged devil then flung one of the great stones at the friar. One version claims that this stone crushed the unfortunate man. Another says that from a lifetime of going barefoot, the friar's heel had become as tough as the stone, so the great stone bounced off his foot and landed upright, becoming what is known as the Heel Stone.

Other English Sites

Another stone circle with a demonic tale is the Stanton Drew Stone Circle in Avon, which probably dates to the second millennium B.C.E. Christian folklore claimed that a group of revelers at a wedding that began on a Saturday afternoon did not wish to stop celebrating. At midnight, however, the fiddler refused to go on playing since it was now the Sabbath day.

The bride swore that the party would continue even if she had to get a fiddler from hell. Sure enough, a mysterious stranger appeared and began to play. It was the devil, who fiddled on until all but the fiddler had turned to stone.

At the borders of Oxfordshire and Warwickshire stands the solitary King Stone, the

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Rollright Stones, and two stone barrows, or burial chambers, called the Whispering Knights and the Archdruid's Barrow. Folklore says that all these stones were once a king and his invading army. Their way was blocked by a local witch, who declared:

Seven long strides shalt thou take.
If Long Compton thou can see
King of England thou shalt be.

The king shouted back at her:

Stick, stock, stone,
As king of England I shall be known.

But when he had taken the seven strides, all he could see was the Archdruid's Barrow, which blocked his view of the village of Long Compton. The witch cried:

As Long Compton thou canst not see,
King of England thou shalt not be!
Rise up stick, and stand still stone,
For king of England thou shalt be none.
Thou and thy men hoar stones shall be
And I myself an eldern tree.

The king instantly turned into the King Stone, his men became the Rollright Stones, and his noble knights became the Whispering Knights. The witch, it is said, forever watches over them in the form of an elder tree. As late as the nineteenth century, it was believed that if the elder tree was cut it would bleed and that the King Stone could move its "head."

Cornish Standing Stones

One of the famous stones near Land's End in Cornwall is Men-An-Tol, also known as the Crick Stone, a standing stone with a hole worked through it. Although it may once have been part of a Neolithic tomb, folk belief for centuries has claimed that crawling through the hole nine times counterclockwise cures

Men-an-Tol, a monolith in Cornwall, England, may date to the second millennium B.C.E. Folk tradition claims that crawling through the hole will cure disease and that sickly children passed through the hole will grow strong. *(Rob Cousins/Robert Harding World Imagery/Getty Images)*

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"cricks" or similar ailments, including rickets in children.

Near Men-An-Tol is a second standing stone, Men Scryfa, which means "the inscribed stone." This stone bears a Latin inscription: *Rialobrani Cunovali Filii,* which means "Rialobran, son of Cunoval." This stone may honor a fallen warrior or even a king. Folk belief claims that Rialobran was 9 feet tall and that he lies beneath the stone with his treasure.

The Merry Maidens circle is a ring of nineteen stones. The folktale about them is of Christian origin. On a Sunday, the nineteen maidens danced and played in the open field instead of going to church. A heavenly thunderbolt turned them to stone for their sin.

A similar story centers around the circle known as the Hurlers of Saint Cleer. In this case, it was a local saint, Saint Cleer, who turned a group to stone for the sin of playing hurling on a Sunday.

Scotland

A number of solitary standing stones are located in the Orkney Islands. The Yetnasteen and Stane o' Quoybune are said to be giants turned to stone that "walk" once a year. This is believed to occur on New Year's Day or some other notable day. The giants walk down to nearby lakes or pools to drink. These tales of giants probably come from the Norse traditions of the Jotun, the Norse giants, since the Vikings colonized these islands.

There are three stones on the island of North Uist, called Na Fir Bhreige, or the False Men. They are said to have been three men who abandoned their wives and ran afoul of an avenging witch, who turned them into stone.

The many tales about standing stones are a rich source of material for storytellers.

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Straparola, Giovanni Francesco

(c. 1480–1557)

Giovanni Francesco Straparola was a noted Italian Renaissance writer, poet, and storyteller who lived in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Straparola was one of the first writers to use folklore in his fiction.

Straparola's year of birth usually is given as sometime around 1480, but the actual date of his birth is unknown, as are many details about his life. Even the spelling of his personal name is uncertain. It may have been Giovanni Francesco or Gianfrancesco. The only thing known for certain is that he was an educated man, which is made evident through his existing works.

Straparola's poetry was not outstandingly successful during his lifetime and is not considered particularly memorable today. However, his two-volume work, *Le Piacevoli Notti,* or *The Facetious Nights of Straparola* (also *The Nights of Straparola*), which he wrote between 1550 and 1553, was very successful with critics and the public both in his time and afterward. *Le Piacevoli Notti* is a collection of seventy-five novellas and fairy tales that includes the original version of "Beauty and the Beast."

Straparola modeled his work after Boccaccio's mid-fourteenth-century *Decameron,* whose format involved a group of people telling one another stories; this device also was used by Geoffrey Chaucer in *The Canterbury Tales,* written in the late fourteenth century. The framework of Straparola's *Le Piacevoli Notti* is thirteen nights of revelry in a luxurious villa on the island of Murano near Venice, during which the participants told each other stories.

The tales include elements of magic and the supernatural, as well as bawdy jokes and anecdotes. Straparola's work is one of Europe's earliest collections of stories based largely on folklore.

Straparola died in about 1557.

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String Figures

String figures are used by some storytellers to illustrate their tales. The figures are created by knotting a length of string to make a loop, fitting the loop around the teller's two hands, and pulling the string around and over the palms of the hands and fingers to depict various objects, including animals, birds, people, buildings, and sites.

Sometimes, the teller uses his or her teeth and even feet to hold the string in place. The string traditionally is derived from plant fiber, although leather thongs, fishing line, dried animal guts, and even human hair sometimes are used. Contemporary tellers generally use commercially colored string or yarn.

String figure artists may depict similar subjects. But the designs depicting the illustrative shapes vary from culture to culture, within a culture, and even within individual string artists' repertoires.

Making string figures remains primarily a nonverbal game for children in North America and England—as with the familiar cat's cradle, for example. People in other cultures create string figures while speaking, singing, or chanting the actions or incidents that are represented by the string shapes.

String Figures Around the World

Two characteristics of this craft suggest that it is a device for passing on a culture's cosmology. First, the figures are often accompanied by poetic, descriptive narrative, and second, the figures themselves frequently represent persons, incidents, and objects associated with mythology and religious beliefs. The narrative may accompany the transformation of the string design as it progresses, or the chant or story may be uttered after the string design is completed.

String figure activities have been documented in cultures as diverse as Native American groups, the Maori in New Zealand, Aborigines in Australia, Rapanui on Easter Island, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Bornean, Fijian, Melanesian, Hawaiian, Filipino, Papua New Guinean, Peruvian, African, New Caledonian, Indian, and Tibetan.

It is likely that the string activity known as cat's cradle was introduced to England in the 1600s as a result of the tea trade with China and Japan. In Japan, cat's cradle is called *itotori,* which means "taking up string," or *aya ito tori,* which refers to a pattern used in weaving. In China, the pattern is called "well rope," as in the rope that is used to pull a bucket out of a well.

Two anthropologists, Drs. W.H.R. Rivers and A.C. Haddon, studied string figures in the Torres Strait islands off Australia. They published their findings in 1902 and created an anatomical classification for the fingering process that was used to create string figures. Although Rivers and Haddon questioned the link between this pastime and Torres Strait cosmology, the string stories they collected seem to indicate that such a connection exists. They note that "one figure which represents boys playing is subsequently converted into two rings, which represent two of the sacred grounds of Mer (Murray Island) in which important initiation ceremonies into the Malu fraternity were held; and another is supposed to represent the passing of the stone-headed clubs from hand to hand during the Malu dances."

Polynesian Tradition

The Maori in New Zealand describe the origin of string stories in a myth accredited to Maui, a Polynesian demigod. They refer to string activity as *maui, whai, huhi,* and more formally, *te whai wawewawe a Maui*. Their string stories and songs often depict tales of the gods. Sometimes, a drama is played out through the changing shapes alone. Two favorite stories involve the ascent of Tawhaki, the lightning god, to heaven and the creation of the land by the hero Maui.

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Rapa Nui, commonly known as Easter Island, is one of the world's most remote inhabited islands. An annual folk festival is held there that includes string figure (*kai kai*) competitions. Two families are selected for the final competition event, each sending its best candidates. When the pattern is completed, the performer holds up the string figure and chants the story that accompanies the shape. Judging criteria include finger dexterity, creativity, and the quality of the chant. The language used in these chants often includes vocabulary from an archaic Rapa Nui language no longer spoken on the island.

One example of such a chant is "Tatatat te vaka pÇ iluihu. Meamea o'ou 'Hoke hore." This means "The boat's fishing net is caught in a reef. Bad luck. Cut it free. The outermost part of the fishing net is now red and bloody."

Native American Tradition

A less formal style of string figure competition was popular among the Kwakiutl Indians in the American Northwest. American ethnologist Julia Averieva described an activity following the evening meal, in which participants created figures without revealing the method of construction. In one string story, called "Brother Came from the Hiding Place Because He Was Afraid of the Coming Rain," the seventh string design in the telling of the story is repeated four times, a typical repetition pattern in many Native American oral narratives.

One brother is depicted looking four times for the other brother. With each repetition, the presenter repeats the refrain, "The snow is coming. Where are you, brother? The hail is coming. Where are you, brother? The rain is coming." As the finale, the strings are shifted so that the round shape that is hidden behind the hand to represent the hiding brother is pulled to the center, and the two loops, which represent the two brothers, face each other.

In his 1888 study of Eskimo culture, anthropologist Franz Boas documented string artists redesigning string shapes to accompany a story. An Inuit string story collected in Siberia describes the adventures of men called *tanayoy.* The performer changes the string design with each line of the text, which is translated here:

The tangarot people
We ran away to hide
We made a tent
[untranslatable]
They ran away.

When the last line is spoken, the string is manipulated so that the two center loops move away in opposite directions.

Longer Native American stories from this region also are adapted for string presentations. For example, the following story has been transposed to string:

An orphan boy was ill-treated by the inmates of the house in which he lived. His place was just inside the door, and he was not allowed to go farther in. The others threw him scraps of food when they were eating. There he was, always sitting in his corner, with his arms withdrawn from the sleeves of his coat and pressed against his body to keep them warm, while his knees were tucked up toward his chin and covered with the bottom of his coat. At last, he grew old enough to take care of himself and went away.

The chant that accompanies the figure is translated here:

Door-closer [the boy's name]
Door-closer who stays over there
Door-closer, shut the door
Why don't you shut the door?
My knees I have covered with my coat
The boy going away

As the presenter recites the last line, the string is manipulated to show a shape moving off to the side, toward the hand, representing the boy leaving home.

On the west coast of Hudson Bay, which is part of the Arctic Ocean, there is a taboo that says that boys must not play cat's cradle. Two hunters lost their fingers in harpoon lines, and it was believed that this resulted from their having played cat's cradle when they were young.

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Hawaiian Practice

In Hawaii, creating string figures is known as *hei* (net), *koko,* and *makali*. The chants that accompany the string figure creations often contain names of gods and physical sites. The chant is sometimes of a simple nature: While saying, "At night, at night, the stars overhang us," the string artist creates seven stars in the design. Then, with "At dawn they are gone," the string is pulled so that the stars disappear.

Studies into Hawaiian culture have found connections between the people's rituals and beliefs and the creation of string figures. At least one string figure, called *hana ka uluna* (prepare the pillow), was used by priests to find out whether the gods of the sick decreed that a patient would live or die. If the chain of five to seven knotted loops did not come undone smoothly, the patient would die.

Although many of the Hawaiian string story chants appear to be straightforward, the Hawaiian language is filled with metaphors. The words in a string story chant may contain a combination of meanings, including puns, as in this example:

> *The youngsters were digging for large potatoes.*
> *"You can't get this big potato."*
> *"It's a little second-class one."*
> *"Well, you can't get even a little second-class one."*

The string figures that accompany this chant represent a boy and girl who have been digging for potatoes. The girl refers to herself as a potato that the boy cannot get, and he retaliates by saying she is not worth having. She replies that he could not even get a second-rate one.

Current Practitioners

String figures are used by many contemporary professional storytellers, including David Novak, Barbara Schutz-Gruber, and Dave Titus. These three have contributed their original string-story adaptations to Belinda Holbrook's book, *String Stories: A Creative, Hands-on Approach for Engaging Children in Literature,* published in 2002. Nineteen stories are accompanied by instructions for forty-five string figures. The book brings long-deserved recognition to the use of string as a traditional and entertaining technique for storytellers.

The International String Figure Association was founded in 1978 by Japanese mathematician Hiroshi Noguchi and Philip Noble, an Anglican missionary stationed in Papua New Guinea. The nonprofit organization strives to gather, preserve, and distribute knowledge of string figures to ensure that this ancient pastime is enjoyed by generations to come.

Ruth Stotter

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Sundiata

(Mali)

Sundiata is an epic that memorializes the founder of a thirteenth-century empire in Mali. Originally an oral epic, it was compiled in the eighteenth century into its current form.

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Although there are some fictional elements in the epic of Sundiata of Mali, he was a historical figure. Kirina, shown here, is one of the three Mandinka towns that formed the foundation of Sundiata's empire. This is where Sundiata fought his rival, Sumanguru, in 1235 C.E. *(Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY)*

Sundiata is still recited in the oral tradition by the Mande people of West Africa.

The historic Sundiata lived in the early thirteenth century. He was the son of Nare Maghan, king of the Mandingo, and his wife, Sogolon Conde. A prophecy predicted that the hunchbacked, ugly Sogolon would bear the beautiful Maghan a son who would grow up to become Mali's greatest king.

The king's first wife, Sassouma, viewed the prophecy as a threat to her own son, Dankaran Touman, whom she felt should inherit the throne. She felt less threatened when she realized that Sogolon's son, Sundiata, was sickly and weak.

After Maghan's death, Sassouma's son became king. Sundiata, who had walked on all fours until this point, stood up for the first time. Sensing that he was becoming powerful, Sogolon went into exile with her son and waited for the time to be right for the prophecy to unfold. In exile, Sundiata had the opportunity to travel widely and become an excellent warrior. After his mother's death, he returned to Mali to claim the throne.

Sundiata discovered that while he was in exile, the Sosso king Sumanguru had attacked Sassouma and her son, who had fled in fear. Sundiata returned with an army and defeated Sumanguru at the Battle of Kirina in 1235.

The epic of Sundiata is full of esoteric images and references to sorcery. All of Maghan's wives are powerful sorceresses, and Sogolon must use her own great power to overcome their tricks and trials, because her co-wives are angered by the prophecy. By defeating the co-wives during a seven-year pregnancy, Sogolon proves she is worthy of bearing greatness.

The historic Sundiata adopted Islam late in life, and one version of the epic traces his descent from Bilal, an African servant of Muhammad. In the epic, however, Sundiata

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uses his native religion and sorcery to defeat his enemies and maintain his position as the greatest king of Mali.

See also: Culture Heroes; Epics.

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Sunken Cities

Commonly found in both folklore and myth, sunken cities also exist in the real world. The folklore of Brittany tells of the deluge that submerged Ys; Greek myth describes the sinking of Atlantis; and archaeologists discover and study the remains of flooded cities.

The real sunken city of Port Royal was discovered on the island of Jamaica. Port Royal was described in the seventeenth century as the wickedest city in the world, a pirate town. But the glory of Port Royal was short-lived. On the morning of June 7, 1692, a massive earthquake struck Jamaica, and much of the city disappeared under the sea. It never fully recovered.

In 2000, archaeologists working in the Gulf of Corinth off the Greek mainland discovered what they believed to be the remains of the ancient Greek city of Helike. Classical texts say that the city was lost to earthquakes and tidal waves and that all its inhabitants died. Some scholars have speculated that such a historic catastrophe may well have given Plato the idea for his story of lost Atlantis.

Another team of scientists working in the Mediterranean just off the Egyptian coast discovered the remains of two 2,500-year-old cities, possibly Menouthis and Herakleion. These important trading cities, which flourished between about 400 and 100 B.C.E., were submerged by at least two violent catastrophes, but scientists have not discovered the exact cause.

Other recent discoveries include a city found off the eastern coast of the Tamil region of India. This site has not yet been dated or identified but may be several thousand years old. Japanese archaeologists announced in 2004 that they may have found the ruins of a submerged city from the Kamakura shogunate (1192–1333 C.E.) off the western coast near Shizuoka Prefecture.

These sunken cities fire the imaginations of storytellers or scholars hunting for tales from the past.

See also: Dahut/Ahes; Lyonesse; Ys/Ker-Ys.

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Superman

(North American)

First introduced in the premier issue of Action Comics in 1938, Superman has gone on to be the most recognized superhero in the world. He can be seen as an example of the archetypical strongman and can be used by storytellers as a lead-in to earlier strong heroes, such as Hercules and Samson.

The red-caped hero was originally conceived by writer Jerry Siegel and artist Joe Shuster as a villain. The pair soon realized that Superman had the makings of a great hero.

Superman is the alternate identity of Clark Kent, a reporter for the *Daily Planet* newspaper in the city of Metropolis. He is an orphan, born with the name Kal-El, the last surviving son of a dying planet.

Sent to Earth, young Clark was raised by Jonathan and Martha Kent, Kansas farmers who saw his spaceship crash. Although he worked hard to appear like a normal boy, it was hard to mask the fact that he had extraordinary powers, including X-ray vision,

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superstrength, invulnerability, incredible speed, and the power to fly. Driven by the urge to help people and make the world a safer place, the young Clark used his powers for good. He eventually adopted the persona of Superman to keep his identity a secret.

Superman is the quintessential good guy, the unwavering hero who always knows right from wrong. He is invulnerable to every weapon known to man, but he does have one weakness—Kryptonite. These meteor fragments from his home planet weaken him. Prolonged exposure to them would kill him.

In 1940, the radio show *The Adventures of Superman* premiered. A year later, Superman cartoons were made by Fleischer Studios for Paramount. In 1951, the movie *Superman and the Mole Men* was released. In 1978, actor Christopher Reeve starred in the first of four Superman movies.

Superman cartoons and live-action series also have appeared on television. In 1953, the popular show starring George Reeves came to life. In 1993, Dean Cain donned the cape. In 2001, Tom Welling took on the challenge of portraying a young Clark Kent who was just discovering his powers in *Smallville.*

Superman has even been on stage. He had his debut on Broadway in 1966 in a musical entitled *It's a Bird . . . It's a Plane . . . It's Superman!*

Few heroes have captured the American imagination like Superman. In many ways, he is the guy next door. He has a regular job and everyday responsibilities, and he suffers from an unrequited love for Lois Lane. On the other hand, he is someone who is fantastically beyond reach with powers that everyone wishes he or she possessed. He is both everyman and the hero that every man would like to be.

See also: Culture Heroes.

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Sword, Broken

(Norse)

The world theme of the broken sword has been found in folklore, mythology, and even psychology. In this theme, a hero inherits his father's shattered sword and must then forge the broken pieces into a true hero's weapon.

One of the most famous of these weapons in mythology comes from Teutonic lore. This was the sword called Gram, which also is related to the sword in the stone of Arthurian legend. Gram is thrust into a tree by the Anglo-Saxon god Wotan, who is called Odin in Norse mythology. Only the hero Sigurd could withdraw it.

In the Norse *Völsunga Saga,* Odin's wife, Frigg, was outraged that Sigurd and Siglinde, who were brother and sister, had become lovers. So Frigg turned Odin against Sigurd. In the battle between Odin and Sigurd, Odin broke the sword, and Sigurd was slain. Sigurd's son, Siegfried, took the shards of the sword, and they were forged into a blade again.

The Arthurian cycle contains two swords that are broken. Arthur's first sword was a nameless blade that was broken in battle. That blade was replaced by the more powerful Excalibur, which was significant in the legend of the Grail. Excalibur was broken when a Saracen wounded Joseph of Arimathea in the thigh. At first, the knights on the quest for the Grail were unable to reforge this broken sword; the only one who could do it was Sir Galahad, the perfect and holy knight.

In fantasy fiction, two prime examples of the broken sword motif stand out. J.R.R. Tolkien used the broken sword motif in his novel *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955). The hero Aragorn bears the broken sword of his royal line, until it is eventually reforged into a kingly blade. Poul Anderson also used the motif in his fantasy novel inspired by Norse sagas, *The Broken Sword* (1954), in which the hero and his changeling brother vie for the weapon.

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See also: Motifs.

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Sword in the Stone/ Sword in the Tree

The sword in the stone or tree is a common folk and mythological motif. The weapon is embedded in a stone or tree until the true hero or chosen ruler removes it. Related motifs are the bow that only the hero can wield and the broken sword.

Perhaps the most familiar version of the motif is found in Arthurian legend. A sword was embedded in a stone, and only Britain's rightful king could remove it. This sword was not Arthur's later weapon, Excalibur; it had no significance or name, but was merely a test. Every knight in the land attempted to remove the sword, and, of course, each of them failed. Arthur, who was still a boy, drew the sword from the stone and was immediately proclaimed king.

There is a second sword in the stone in the Arthurian cycle, simply called the Sword with the Red Hilt. The sorcerer Merlin thrust this sword into a stone. Sir Galahad, the saintly son of Sir Lancelot, removed it. This showed his worthiness to become the Grail Knight, the only one pure enough to find and hold the Holy Grail.

In Norse and Germanic mythology, specifically in the Norse *Völsunga Saga,* Odin, king of the gods, thrust a hero's sword deep into a tree (or alternately, into a flaming log). He announced that only the true hero would be able to remove it. The true hero was revealed as Sigurd, who was the human son of Odin.

See also: King Arthur; Motifs.

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Swords

In the world of folklore and storytelling, swords are more than inanimate weapons. They are companions to the heroes who wield them and often possess spirits of their own.

Swords have been made in many shapes and sizes since at least the second millennium B.C.E. They range from the short sword of the Romans—the *gladius* used by gladiators—to the Scottish claymore, which was as long as a man was tall. Swords have been made from every metal that will hold an edge or a point—from bronze to steel—and have often been engraved with runes or other symbols. In folkloric tradition, the spirit of each sword is extremely sensitive to the spirit of its owner.

Ideally, a swordsman would be present during every stage of the weapon's manufacture in order to create a strong bond between himself and his sword. The sword of the Albanian hero Iskander Beg is a perfect example of the spiritual relationship between weapon and warrior. When this sword was wielded by a brave man, it instantly became both sharper and stronger. When it was handled by a coward, it grew blunt.

From the ancient Greeks to the era of Emperor Charlemagne, all heroes bore a special, named blade.

Greek Mythology

- The sword of Peleus, which magically made a swordsman victorious in battle.

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Teutonic Mythology

- The god Frey's sword, the sword of sharpness.
- Hofud, the sword of the god Heimdall, who guarded Asgard.
- Nothung, the sword of Siegfried.
- Gram, the sword of Sigurd.
- Hruntung, the sword of the hero Beowulf.

Celtic Mythology

- Caladbolg, the magic sword of Fergus MacRoich, sharp and strong enough to cut off the tops of three hills.
- Claiomh Solais, the sword of light, used by the gods.
- Fragarach, the sword of air, which was forged by the gods and held the power of the winds.

Japanese Mythology

- Kursanagi-no-tsurugi, the sword of the god Susanoo.

Arthurian Lore

- Excalibur, King Arthur's sword, given to him by the Lady of the Lake.
- Clarent, the sword in the stone.
- Cernwennan, King Arthur's dagger.
- Galatine, the sword of Sir Gawain.
- Secace, the sword of Sir Lancelot.

Charlemagne Lore

- Durindana/Durandal/Durendal, Roland's sword.
- Hauteclere, Olivier's sword.
- Curtana, the sword of Ogier the Dane.

The tradition of named or magical swords continues in modern fantasy fiction. British author Michael Moorcock's doomed hero Elric of Melniboné, whose series of stories has run from the 1980s to the present, wields a sword called Stormbringer.

See also: Motifs.

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Symphonic/Tone Poems

In classical music, a symphonic poem is an orchestral work that is inspired by nature, art, or literature. A symphonic poem is a strictly instrumental work that attempts to tell a story using the music alone, with the listener's imagination filling in the gaps. Examples of symphonic poems include Richard Strauss's *Til Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks* (1894–1895), Claude Debussy's *The Afternoon of a Faun* (1894), and Ottorino Respighi's *Roman Festivals* (1928). In general, this genre is written in a single movement.

Telling a Story with Music

Composers use a variety of techniques to convey an idea in music. Some attempt to tell a complete story, particularly when the tale is a familiar one. Less familiar stories receive a less literal treatment. Strauss's *Don Quixote* (1897) is an example of a literal interpretation, while Debussy's *The Afternoon of the Faun* is only loosely based on the poem "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune" (1876) by Stéphane Mallarmé. A composer can tell the story through the use of several techniques, such as sound effects, melodic themes, and specific instrumentation to represent different characters, or simply by evoking a mood.

Music can reproduce or approximate sounds, from a train whistling past, as in Arthur Honneger's *Pacific 231* (1923), to the sound of sheep bleating in a meadow, as is heard in *Don Quixote*. The device of re-creating authentic sounds musically has probably been used since the first musical instruments were made.

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While music can imitate real-life sounds, it also can evoke emotions. Moods are portrayed through the use of the following devices: melody, which is a recognizable tune; harmony, the combination of sounds accompanying the melody; mode, either major or minor; and rhythm and tempo.

Instrumentation and Theme

To convey the details of a story, composers sometimes assign a musical theme or specific instrument to a character.

A theme can be a whole melody or just a fragment of one, but either way, it is something unique that acts as a reminder of a single character or a group. The French horn melody heard at the beginning of Strauss's *Til Eulenspiegel* is Til's theme. This melodic line suits the character perfectly, as it jumps from high to low the way a ball might bounce down a flight of stairs. A very different theme is used in Pyotr Ilich Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* (1880), to represent the ill-fated lovers of Shakespeare's famous play.

Some composers also associate particular instruments with their main characters, such as the French horn in *Til Eulenspiegel*. In *The Afternoon of a Faun,* Debussy assigns the flute to the main character. Debussy's melody resembles the music of pan pipes, an instrument made of several hollow reeds that dates to biblical times.

Subtitles and Program Notes

If the story is not a familiar one, the composer may supply a written summary or descriptive titles and subtitles to fill in important information. In Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony no. 6, written in 1809 and published as the *Pastoral Symphony,* each of the five movements has a subtitle that suggests the action or feeling that Beethoven was trying to evoke. Loosely translated from the original German, they are "Becoming Cheerful on Arriving in the Country," "A Scene at a Brook," "A Merry Get-together with the Country Folk," "Thunderstorm," and "Calm and Thanks After the Storm."

Along with titles and subtitles, composers often provide information in the form of program notes. The first composition for orchestra with a "real" story line usually is considered to be Hector Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*. Written in 1830 and subtitled *Episode in the Life of an Artist,* this work tells the story of the French composer's nightmare that comes, in part, from his failed desire to win the heart of the Irish actress Henrietta Smithson. This symphony also has five movements with subtitles: "Dreams and Passions," "A Ball," "Country Scenes," "March to the Scaffold," and "Dream of a Witche's Sabbath." Berlioz also wrote program notes that describe in detail what occurs in the five portions of his nightmare.

Other Works

Some symphonic poems do not tell a story but attempt to give an impression of something real, as in Honneger's ode to the steam locomotive, *Pacific 231*; Debussy's *Nuages* (*Clouds*, 1897); and Respighi's *Pines of Rome* (1926). Bedrich Smetana's cycle of six symphonic poems, *Ma Vlast* (*My Country*; 1874–1879), is a conceptual work in this genre. In all cases, symphonic poems seek to convey stories through music.

Film scores are similar to symphonic poems in the methods and techniques used to tell a story or evoke feelings. They are, in a way, the "modern" symphonic poems.

Steven Rosenhaus

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Tail Tales

In the tail tale, a world folktale type, a foolish animal is tricked by a clever one into losing its tail.

The most familiar version, which is common to the folklore of Norway and England, features a fox and a bear. At the start of the story, the bear has a long, flowing tail. The fox tells the bear that the best way to catch fish in the winter is to cut a hole in the ice, using its tail as fishing line. The bear believes this and is soon frozen fast to the ice. The only way for it to get free is to tear loose, leaving its tail behind. This is why bears have stubby tails today.

Variations on this basic story are found from Finland to India. The trickster's motivation in these tales ranges from an act of pure spite to a need either to teach a bully a lesson or to escape a predator.

In a related story, the gullible character buries its tail, only to be attacked by the trickster when it is unable to flee. It has to tear free, and winds up with a stubby tail. This version is found in India, Indonesia, and Spain, as well as in the West Indies.

In another variant, a bear or wolf is tricked into thinking that a basket tied to its tail is full of fish, when it is actually filled with stones. The weight of the basket slows the animal down so that the trickster can escape. In a German version, the bear, again dragging a stone-filled basket, jumps over a fire and loses his tail.

See also: Tale Types.

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Tale Types

The term *tale type* has multiple meanings. Literary scholars, storytellers, psychologists, and folklorists each apply this term differently.

In English and world literature studies, the term *tale type* generally refers to a genre, such as horror, fiction, or theater. Storytellers may use the term similarly, referring to tale types such as tall tales, ghost stories, urban legends, or Celtic mythology. In psychology, a tale type generally refers to stories categorized by similar functions, such as women's stories, stories dealing with abuse, or magical tales. Folklorists also use tale types as a method of categorization.

Folklore tale types are part of a numbering system formulated by nineteenth-century Finnish folklorists Kaarle Krohn and Julius

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Krohn. This system of categorization was further developed by Antti Aarne in his work *The Types of the Folktale* (FFC 3; 1910), which was translated and expanded by Stith Thompson in 1928, and again in 1961, in *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography.* This work is referred to as the Aarne-Thompson tale type index or, more simply, as the tale type index.

In the tale type index, traditional folk narrative plots are grouped together, based on their similar motifs, and numbered. Each of these groups is a tale type. The index lists 2,499 tale types. Cinderella, for example, is tale type 510, the persecuted heroine. Each tale type is identified by a specific combination of motifs. The Aarne-Thompson tale type numbers are noted as AT or AaTH, followed by the number assigned to that particular tale, as in the following excerpt from the index:

> AT 360: "The Shoes That Were Danced to Pieces." Plot summary: Twelve princesses wear out their shoes every night. A soldier, with the aid of an invisible cloak, solves the mystery, discovering that they are dancing. His reward is the hand of one of the princesses. Motifs that combine to structure AT 360: T68 Princess offered as a prize. F1015.1.1 Danced-out shoes. D1364.7 Sleeping potion. D1980 Magic invisibility. D2131 Magic underground journey. H80 Identification by tokens. Variants of AT 360 include:
>
> "The Danced-Out Shoes" (Russian), in Stith Thompson's 100 Folktales, no. 6.
>
> "Elena the Wise," Afanaysev, Russian Fairy Tales, p. 545.
>
> "Hild, Queen of the Elves," Simpson, Icelandic Folktales and Legends, p. 43.
>
> "The Shoes That Were Danced to Pieces" (German), Grimm, No. 133.
>
> "Twelve Dancing Princesses," Lang, Red Fairy Book.

Tale types can be a very useful source of inspiration for storytellers. If a storyteller is hunting for a fresh version of a familiar tale, a look at any collection of tale types can help. Such collections also can help a storyteller who wants to combine tale elements into a fresh story.

Ruth Stotter

See also: Motifs.

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Talismans

Talismans are objects that act as charms. Generally, they are specially prepared objects made of a specific material—stone, metal, wood, or parchment—that has been inscribed with magical signs, characters, or drawings that endow them with magical properties. These objects are believed to bring the owner good luck, success, health, and virility.

A talisman is not meant to be worn. Instead, it is carried or placed near the person or object that must be protected.

See also: Amulets.

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Tall Tales

Tall tales are stories that feature a larger-than-life or superhuman main character that has a specific task. The task takes the form of an outlandish problem that is solved in a humorous or outrageous way. The main elements in a tall tale are the story's exaggerated and improbable details.

The word *tall* acquired a meaning of "grandiose" or "high-flown" in the seventeenth century. The term *tall tale* probably dates to the mid-nineteenth century, although there is no proof of its first use. In modern usage, a tall tale is simply a lie or an outlandish excuse.

Tall tales have a long tradition that may date to the ancient Greeks. The Romans were also familiar with this type of story, as were the Celts.

In Europe, tall tales are sometimes called Münchhausen tales, after the eighteenth-century German storyteller Karl Friedrich Hieronymus Baron von Münchhausen, who was nicknamed the Baron of Lies.

In the United States and Canada, tall tales are called yarns, windies, whoppers, stretchers, and gallyfloppers. Many tall tales from the New World originated with immigrant groups. Something about the vastness of the new land seemed to inspire these humorous, larger-than-life stories. Over time, groups of American workers, from cowboys to steelworkers, each created their own tall-tale champions—superhuman heroes who shared their work experience and triumphed over all obstacles.

Tall tales are linked closely with oral tradition, but many of them are created tales with known authors. The character Pecos Bill, for example, made his first appearance in the "Saga of Pecos Bill," which was written by Edward O'Reilly in the early 1920s. There is also some evidence that Paul Bunyan, the giant logger, and his great blue ox, Babe, might have been a newspaperman's creation. Today, Paul Bunyan, like Pecos Bill, has entered the folk tradition.

Not every tall-tale hero was imaginary. Davy Crockett, the famous frontiersman and politician, had a cycle of tall tales told about him—many of them created by Crockett himself.

Other tall tales are told about regions or local claims to fame. These include tales of the gigantic size of Texas, where everything is larger than life, or Idaho's potatoes, which grow larger than any others—or so the stories claim.

In telling a tall tale, the storyteller should make the audience aware that the story is fiction, not fact. This can be done by using a specific opening, such as overdoing the idea that yes, this is the truth—really it is—or by using a sly tone or delivery. Once the audience realizes that what they are hearing is a tall tale, it is up to the teller to embellish the story with the creativity and cleverness necessary to hold the audience's attention.

Gregory Hansen

See also: Urban Legends.

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Talmudic Storytelling

(Jewish)

Although the Talmud is usually thought of simply as a repository for Jewish legal decisions, it also contains a wealth of folktales and stories. Many of the stories tell of the lives and deeds of major biblical figures and of biblical events, such as the Genesis story of creation. The stories also use biblical themes to teach important lessons.

The Oral Law

The Torah is the first five books of the Bible, or the five books of Moses. These are the stories that Moses received directly from God.

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The first part of the Talmud is called the Mishnah and is referred to as half of the "whole Torah of Moses at Sinai." The religious and civil laws contained in the Mishnah were handed down orally from generation to generation and were finally written down around 200 C.E.

Rabbi Judah the Prince took it upon himself to oversee the Mishnah's transition from an oral work to the written format that is studied to this day. By the time the Mishnah was codified, other traditions had risen up around the laws. Stories and folklore were seen as important enough to include in the work, especially those that shed light on some of the more obscure laws.

The Mishnah together with these later stories and lessons became the Talmud. This blending has provided the basis for still more commentary, and, in this way, the Talmud continues to expand today.

Types and Purpose of Talmudic Stories

Many stories in the Talmud detail the lives of the rabbis, while others speak of the rabbis' interactions with one another and with laymen. The stories that serve to explain or expand upon biblical events and personalities are among the most intriguing in this work.

Explaining Contradictions

Several contradictions arise in the Torah text, and Talmudic rabbis attempt to reconcile these inconsistencies in inventive ways.

In one example, the rabbis noticed that God created light before he created the Sun and the Moon. To explain this, they suggested that the light mentioned prior to the creation of the Sun must be a different kind of light. This light enabled Adam to see from one end of the universe to the other. When he and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, the light was extinguished for them. A small part of that light was hidden by God inside a glowing stone known as the *tzohar*. The tzohar was given to Adam as a reminder of all that had been lost.

This story goes on to explain that Adam passed the glowing stone to his son Seth, who gave it to his son, and so on down to Noah, who used the tzohar to illuminate the ark. The Talmud records Abraham wearing a glowing stone around his neck that had healing powers.

In the end of days, when the Messiah arrives, the light from the stone will be released and restored to the original light of creation. Thus, a contradiction is paved over and a hope for the future is introduced.

Emulating God's Attributes

Certain stories in the Talmud relate directly to God's deeds. Others point out divine characteristics to show how these attributes should be mastered by mortals on Earth.

This example of the former is found in God's reaction to the death of his own creatures; it is meant to teach us not to be overjoyed by the fall of anyone, even our enemies:

> When the Egyptian armies were drowning in the sea, the Heavenly Hosts broke out in songs of jubilation. God silenced them and said, "My creatures are perishing, and you sing praises?"

Another passage illustrates God's modesty:

> Modesty is a quality of God. When He appeared to Moses the first time He did not appear in the form of a proud cedar tree, but in the form of a lowly bush. When He gave the Torah to the Jews He did so from Sinai, which is small compared to the great mountains.

Stories of the Patriarchs

A fascinating element in the Torah is that many of the most prominent figures are shown "warts and all." They doubt. They are indecisive. They get angry.

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The rabbis of the Talmud are not afraid to speak out against the mistakes made by even the most important personages, including the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The rabbis dissect the biblical stories to show where the great men of the past could have done better.

Remembering to Rely on God

Jewish tradition holds that everything is just the way that God intended. This is referred to as divine order. Humans should not attempt to understand God's will or to alter his plan.

A story is told of King Solomon, who overheard two birds talking about the impending death of two of the king's closest advisers. Solomon knew that the Angel of Death was not allowed into the city of Luz and instructed his advisers to go there.

Solomon continues, "But when they arrived they saw, to their horror, the Angel of Death waiting for them. 'How did you know to look for us here?' they asked. The angel replied: 'This is where I was told to meet you.' "

This story exemplifies the futility of trying to escape the inevitable, stressing that we should be dependent on God and trust that even if we cannot understand his ways, that he knows what is best for his creation.

The Prophet Elijah

The prophet Elijah teaches several important lessons in the Talmudic stories. In an oft-repeated story, Elijah teaches a rabbi that there is a great value in making people feel better about themselves:

> Rabbi Beroka Hazzah used to frequent the market of Be Lapat, where Elijah often appeared to him. Once he asked Elijah, "Is there anyone in this market who is worthy of a share in the world to come?" He [Elijah] replied, "No." While they were walking, two men passed by and he said, "These two are due for a share in the world to come." He [Rabbi Beroka] approached them and asked: "What is your occupation?" They replied: "We are merrymakers. When people are sad we cheer them up, and when we see two people who have quarreled we try to make peace between them."

Learning from the Adversary

In Jewish thought, Satan is simply "the adversary," one of many divine beings who present themselves before God from time to time. One story in the Talmud shows the best way to avoid being ensnared by Satan:

> Plemo used to say every day: "I defy Satan." One day before the Day of Atonement Satan appeared to him in the guise of a poor man. Plemo brought him out a piece of bread. The poor man said to him, "On a day like this everyone is inside but I am outside!" He took him inside and gave him the bread. The poor man now said, "At a time like this everyone eats at the table, but I am alone!" He seated him at the table. He feigned that his skin was full of scabs, and he acted repulsively. Plemo said to him, "Sit properly." He then said, "Give me a cup of wine to drink." He gave it to him. He coughed and threw his phlegm into the cup. Plemo rebuked him, and [the disguised Satan] pretended he was dead. The rumor began to circulate: Plemo killed a man. Plemo ran away and hid himself in a toilet outside the city. When Satan saw how distressed he was, he revealed himself to him and said, "Why did you speak so defiantly of Satan?" "But how else should I have spoken?" he asked. Satan answered, "You should say, 'May the Merciful One rebuke Satan.' "

This lengthy passage is meant to show that nothing can be accomplished unless God is involved. Plemo cannot defy Satan himself; he can only ask that God do so on Plemo's behalf.

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Judaism is a covenantal religion, and so both parties—Israel and God—have their parts to play in the continuing existence of the people.

From the very first verses of the Torah, when the world is brought into being, to the last, when Moses is praised for a final time, it can be demonstrated that Judaism has a very strong storytelling tradition. The stories of the Torah are meant to educate students on the proper way to live, the proper way to worship, and the proper way to treat others.

David M. Honigsberg

See also: *Retelling: King Solomon and the Demon.*

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Tasmisus

(Hittite)

Tasmisus is a Hittite deity. His parents were Anu and Kumarbi, who conceived Tasmisus along with Aranzahus and the storm god, Teshub.

Tasmisus was spat out by Kumarbi onto Mount Kanzuras. After this rough and unnatural birth, Tasmisus joined up with Anu and the storm god to destroy Kumarbi.

He served as the storm god's messenger and attendant and had the power to control the storm winds, rain, and lightning in the storm god's name. Tasmisus took part in the storm god's final, successful battle against Ullikummi.

Ira Spar

See also: Hermes.

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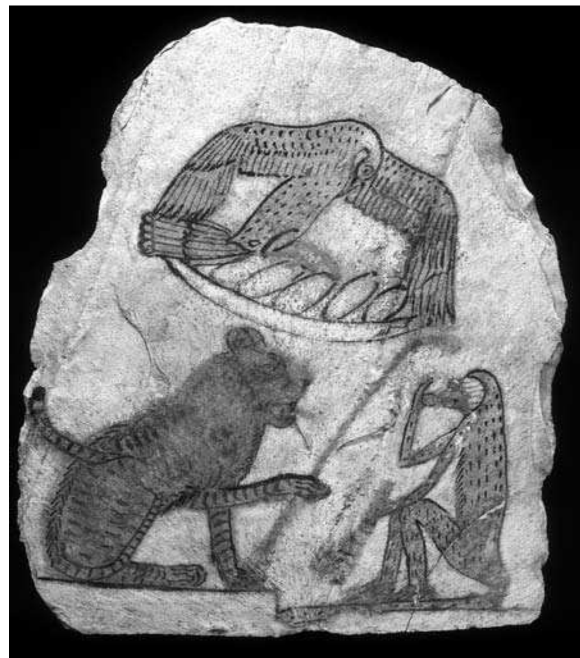
Tefnut

(Egyptian)

The Egyptian goddess Tefnut was the counterpart and consort of her brother Shu, the air god. The meaning of her name is not known, but, like her husband, she had an atmospheric association, perhaps as moist air.

Both Tefnut and Shu came forth from the nose or mouth of the primordial god, Atum. Together, they produced the earth god, Geb, and his sister, the sky goddess, Nut. Artists depicted Tefnut as a lioness or as a woman with the head of a lion.



The Egyptians loved animal fables. Here, Tefnut, daughter of the sun god Re, is portrayed as a lioness and Thoth, god of wisdom, is a baboon. This artist's sketch was found in western Thebes and dates to about 1250–1100 B.C.E. *(Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/ Art Resource, NY)*

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Tefnut was identified with the governing principal of *maat,* or order, as Shu was with forces of change. She also was identified with the eye of the sun god, Re, which brought her into close association with other goddesses, such as Hathor and Sekhmet.

Certain texts tell of a quarrel between Tefnut and Re. The goddess ran away to sulk in Nubia. Re sent Thoth, god of wisdom, to convince her to return. Ultimately successful, Thoth returned with the pacified Tefnut, who was sometimes considered to be Thoth's wife.

Noreen Doyle

See also: Maat.

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Telegonia

(Greek)

The lost Greek epic that is known as the *Telegonia* is named for its hero, Telegonus, the son of Odysseus and Circe.

The written form of this epic is believed to date to the fifth century B.C.E. and has been attributed to a poet named Eugamonn. An earlier oral version may have existed, since some of the *Telegonia*'s elements are found in Homer's *Odyssey,* which was written in the eighth or ninth century B.C.E. Although the original of the *Telegonia* is lost, there is a complete summary contained in the *Chrestomatheia,* a later work attributed to the philosopher Proclus Diadochus.

The story begins after Homer's *Odyssey* ends. Odysseus has returned home to Ithaca and has done away with his wife's suitors. The *Telegonia* states that after the burial of the suitors Odysseus made sacrifices to the nymphs.

He then left his home and wife and traveled to Elis and then on to Thesprotia. There, Odysseus was involved in an affair with Queen Callidice, who bore him a son, Polypoites. Odysseus fought for the Thesprotians in a war against their neighbors, but when Callidice died in the battle, Odysseus returned to Ithaca.

Meanwhile, Circe gave birth to another of Odysseus's sons, Telegonus, who lived with Circe on her island called Aeaea. When Telegonus had grown to manhood, Circe revealed the name of his father and gave him a spear made by the smith god Hephaestus. The spear was tipped with the sting of a poisonous stingray. Telegonus went in search of Odysseus.

A storm forced Telegonus onto Ithaca, although at the time he did not know where he had landed. Desperate for food, he stole some cattle, unaware that they were the property of his father. Odysseus defended his property and fought Telegonus, neither one knowing the other's identity. Telegonus killed Odysseus with his spear. As Odysseus lay dying, he and Telegonus discovered their relationship. Telegonus lamented his mistake.

Telegonus, Odysseus's widow, Penelope, and her son, Telemachus, traveled with Odysseus's body to Aeaea. There, Odysseus was buried, and Circe made the others immortal. Telegonus and Penelope were wed, as were Telemachus and Circe.

See also: Epics; *Odyssey.*

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Telepinu/Telepinus

(Hittite)

Called the noble god, Telepinu was an agricultural deity of the Hittite pantheon and

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the firstborn and favorite son of the storm god. It was Telepinu who introduced plows, harrowing, and irrigation.

In one myth, Telepinu was angered and stormed off onto the vast steppes. There, he was overcome by weariness and fell into a deep sleep. Without the god of agriculture, the lands, crops, and herds lost their fertility. Both gods and humans were faced with the peril of famine.

The goddess Hannahanna was asked for help. She sent one of her bees after Telepinu, which found him and stung his hands and feet to awaken him. This made Telepinu even angrier, and he sent floods that destroyed houses.

At last, the gods found a way to remove Telepinu's anger through magic. Telepinu went home, and fertility was restored to the land.

In another myth, Telepinu's father asked him to bring back the sun god from the sea god. Telepinu so frightened the sea god that he not only won the day but was given the hand of the sea god's daughter as well.

Ira Spar

See also: Culture Heroes.

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Teshub

(Hittite)

Teshub was the Hittite storm god, also known as Taru, Tarhun (the conqueror), and the king of Kummiya (king of heaven). Chief among the gods, with a bull as his symbol, Teshub was a god of battle and of victory and the consort of Wurusemu.

Teshub was a child of Anu and Kumarbi, conceived along with Tasmisus and Aranzahus when Kumarbi bit off and swallowed Anu's phallus. Teshub plotted with Anu, Tasmisus, and Aranzhus to destroy Kumarbi, and seized the kingship in heaven.

Among his battles, Teshub fought the monstrous diorite giant, Ullikummi, and, with the help of the other gods, defeated him. He also battled and defeated the dragon called Illuyankas.

In one myth, Teshub's son, Telepinu, flew into a wild rage and went into hiding. But in another, very similar myth, it was Teshub who ran off and journeyed to the so-called Dark Earth in a rage. He returned with the help of his mother, Wuruntemu (or Ereshkigal), the sun goddess.

Ira Spar

See also: Upelluri/Ubelluris; Wurusemu.

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Theseus

(Greek)

Theseus is one of the most famous heroes in Greek mythology. He was the son of Aegeus, king of Athens, and Aethra of Troezen. Some versions say that Theseus's father was Poseidon, god of the oceans.

When Aethra was pregnant, Aegeus left Troezen to return to Athens. Before leaving, he placed a sword and sandals under a rock. If Aethra bore a boy, he was to go to Athens to claim his birthright as soon as he was strong enough to lift the rock.

The young Theseus came of age and lifted the rock. Retrieving the sandals and sword, he set out for Athens.

On his way to Athens, Theseus had several adventures with wild beasts and brigands. One of the latter, Procrustes, was particularly

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notorious. He would invite guests to sleep on his bed, and if the unfortunate guest was too short for the bed, Procrustes would stretch him to fit it. If the guest was too tall, Procrustes would make him fit by cutting off his feet.

Medea

When Theseus reached Athens, he faced a new problem—Medea, the wife of Aegeus. Medea was the sorceress who had helped her husband, Jason, to win the Golden Fleece, only to be betrayed by him. She had slain their children and fled to Athens.

When Theseus arrived in Athens, Aegeus did not know that the young man was his son. Medea saw Theseus as a possible rival and persuaded Aegeus to kill him by sending Theseus to capture the savage Marathonian Bull. To Medea's disappointment, Theseus was victorious, so she told Aegeus to give Theseus poisoned wine. But just as Theseus was about to drink, Aegeus recognized Theseus's sword and knocked the goblet away. Medea fled.

After Medea's departure, there was bloodshed between the houses of Aegeus and Minos, his brother, in Crete. A drought struck Athens, and an oracle warned that Minos must be offered compensation. Minos demanded seven maidens and seven youths to be sacrificed to the Minotaur, the monstrous creature that was half man and half bull, once every nine years.

Theseus was among the chosen victims. He promised Aegeus that his ship's black flag would be replaced with a white flag if he was victorious, and sailed off to Crete to vanquish the Minotaur. Ariadne, a young Cretan woman already betrothed to Dionysus, fell in love with Theseus and helped him defeat the Minotaur. Ariadne left Crete with Theseus, but he abandoned her on the island of Dia. Theseus later married Ariadne's sister, Phaedra.

Returning to Athens, Theseus forgot to switch the black sail to the white one. Aegeus, sure that his son was dead, hurled himself into the sea. The sea was named the Aegean Sea in his honor.

After Aegeus's death, Theseus's brother, Pallas, conspired to assassinate him. So Theseus killed Pallas and took the throne.

Further Adventures

Theseus and his good friend Peirithous both wanted to marry daughters of Zeus. They began by kidnapping the young Helen, who would later play a major role in the Trojan War. Theseus won Helen in a bet with Peirithous, and then had to accompany his friend to Hades to steal away Persephone. Peirithous did not survive this adventure.

Theseus also fought against the Amazons, the mythical female warriors. Some accounts say that he alone fought them; others say he fought at the side of Hercules. But all the stories agree that Theseus returned with a captured Amazon wife, either Antiope, the queen's sister, or Hippolyte, the Amazon queen. A battle followed, as the Amazons fought to free their comrade. Depending on the version of the story, she was either slain or freed, but she left a son with Theseus, called Hippolytus.

Theseus then married Ariadne's sister, Phaedra. But that marriage was to end in tragedy. Phaedra was much younger than Theseus and tried to seduce his son, Hippolytus. When the young man refused her, she accused him of rape. Hippolytus, escaping his father's anger, rode too close to the cliffs and was killed by a wave sent by Poseidon. Phaedra, overcome by guilt, killed herself.

Late in his life, Theseus was exiled from Athens. He died in a fall from a cliff.

See also: Culture Heroes; Minotaur.

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Thompson, Stith

(1885–1976)

The twentieth-century American folklorist Stith Thompson is known for his work with folklore, mythology, and folktale types. Thompson created a center for folklore studies and established folklore as an academic discipline. Among his numerous publications, perhaps his most important contribution was the *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*. This reference work in six volumes, first published between 1932 and 1936, catalogs recurrent subjects, characters, themes, motifs, and other elements found in world folklore.

Thompson was born in Bloomfield, Kentucky, on March 7, 1885. As a young man, he studied English literature at the University of Wisconsin, where he earned his bachelor's degree in 1909. He went on to complete his master's degree in English literature at the University of California. Thompson's dissertation, "European Tales Among the North American Indians," earned him a Ph.D. in English from the same university. In 1921, Thompson was appointed associate professor of English and director of composition at Indiana University, where he was promoted to professor of English and folklore in 1939. He remained at Indiana University until his retirement in 1955.

While teaching folklore courses, Thompson continued to work on codifying folk narratives. His first major contribution was the translation and enlargement of Finnish folklorist Antti Aarne's tale type index, *Verzeichnis der Märchentypen* (*The Types of the Folktale*) in 1928, which he revised again in 1961. The index is now commonly referred to as the Aarne-Thompson tale type index or as just the tale type index. Tales are classified by Aarne-Thompson numbers (noted as AT or AaTH).

Thompson also compiled the *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* between 1932 and 1936. Both the tale type and motif indexes are essential reference works for folklorists and storytellers. In 1946, Thompson published *The Folktale,* which contained a selection of folktales from various geographical regions, as well as explanations of forms, classification, collections, and a summary of scholarship and theories.

Thompson served as president of the American Folklore Society from 1937 to 1939. He was the U.S. delegate to the 1937 International Folklore Congress in Paris.

An excellent administrator, Thompson established the first U.S. doctoral program in folklore at Indiana University in 1949. During his tenure as dean of Indiana University, Thompson founded a summer institute for scholars and students for the study of folklore and established a folklore collection in the library. In recognition and appreciation of his tireless industry, Thompson was named a distinguished service professor in 1953.

Thompson died in Columbus, Indiana, on January 13, 1976.

Maria Teresa Agozzino

See also: Aarne, Antti; Motif Index.

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Thor

(Norse)

Thor, the Norse god of thunder, generally was portrayed as a powerfully built man with flaming red or red-gold hair and beard.

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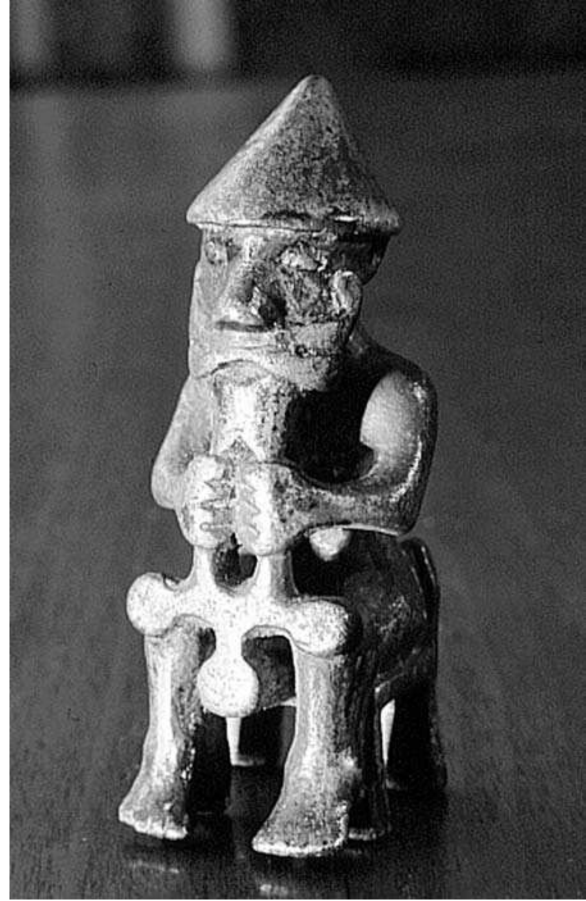
This mighty warrior had gloves of iron and a magic belt called Megingjard that doubled his strength. His favorite weapon was his hammer, Mjollnir. Thor threw Mjollnir to make the lightning flash, and it always returned to his hand.

During thunderstorms, Thor was believed to be riding across the heavens in his chariot pulled by two goats, Tanngrisni (gap-tooth) and Tanngnost (tooth-grinder). Whenever Thor grew hungry, he would slay and eat the goats, who would then magically return to life.

Thor's home was his hall, Bilskirnir, which he shared with his wife, Sif. He also had a long-lasting affair with a woman of the giants, Jarnsaxa, by whom he had three children: two sons, Magni and Modi, and a daughter, Thrud.



Thor was the Norse god of thunder and lightning. In this first-century C.E. bronze, Thor is holding his hammer, called Mjollnir. The figurine, which dates to about 1000 C.E., was found in Iceland. *(Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY)*

Thor and Thrym

A giant called Thrym stole Thor's hammer and demanded the hand of Freya, the goddess of love and beauty, in exchange. This was out of the question, so Thor and the mischievous Loki devised a plot to get the hammer back.

Thor disguised himself as Freya and set off for Thrym's hall. There, the giants were amazed at how much the "bride" ate and drank, but Loki explained that this was because she had not eaten or drunk for nine days in anticipation of this day. Thrym wanted to kiss his bride, but he was put off by her fiery eyes and ruddy complexion. Loki explained that she was feverish from lack of sleep.

Eager to get the marriage over and done, Thrym had the magic hammer placed on the bride's knees, as was the custom. This was a fatal error. Thor, shedding his disguise, took up the hammer. Soon, all the giants in the hall lay dead.

The Midgard Serpent

Thor was a great fisherman and decided to catch the ultimate prize: the Midgard serpent. This incredibly large snake encircled the world, holding its tail in its mouth.

Thor sailed out with the giant Hymir as guide and took the boat farther out to sea than Hymir would normally have ventured. Thor baited his hook and cast his line, hooking the Midgard serpent.

A tremendous battle ensued between god and beast. Thor began to win the savage battle, and might have killed the serpent, but the terrified Hymir, sure he would be drowned, cut the line. The force of the release sent Thor crashing back into Hymir, and the giant was drowned.

In another version of this tale, after Hymir cut the line, Thor struck him an angry blow that hurled the giant overboard. Hymir managed to climb back aboard the boat, while Thor waded ashore.

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The Common Man's God

Odin, the supreme god and creator, was the preferred god of the Norse noblemen. But his son Thor was a deity of the common man. This was perhaps because Odin was a fairly ambiguous figure and worship of him included human sacrifice. Thor was benevolent toward mankind and did not demand sacrifice.

See also: Norse Mythology; *Retelling: Thor Catches the Midgard Serpent.*

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Thoth/Djehuty

(Egyptian)

Thoth is the Egyptian god most closely associated with intellectual pursuits, including writing and magic. Divine scribe and so-called lord of the sacred words, he often was shown making calculations, recording events, or announcing judgments.

Thoth appeared as a yellow baboon, a sacred ibis, or a man with the head of an ibis. As a moon god, he often wore a crown of a lunar disc cradled in a lunar crescent.

Thoth was cast as an impartial judge in the contest between the gods Horus and Seth for the crown. Thoth eventually became an advocate for the young Horus. He took on a similar role for the mortal dead, recording the outcome of the weighing of their hearts against *maat* (truth) and proclaiming the results before Osiris, god of the dead. As such a participant in the divine judicial system, Thoth had weights and measures under his jurisdiction.

Thoth's knowledge extended to all branches of learning. He taught Isis the magic necessary to revive the dead and was capable of restoring the lost eye of Horus. By the Middle and New Kingdoms (c. 2106–1786 B.C.E. and c. 1550–1069 B.C.E., respectively), he was viewed as the establisher of laws and the principles of sacred architecture, decoration, texts, and rites.

At Hermopolis, which was Thoth's principle cult center, he created the Ogdoad, a set of eight divinities that included Nun and Amun. He also was regarded as the eldest son of Re, whom he often accompanied in the solar barque (the ship that represents the rising and setting Sun) as either the scribe of the divine book at the right of Re or the scribe of Maat.

The Book of Thoth was purported to contain all knowledge, cultural and natural. While Thoth could see into anyone else's heart, he himself was mysterious and unknown.

Seshat, goddess of writing, is variously credited as Thoth's wife or daughter. In Greek mythology, he is Hermes.

Noreen Doyle

See also: Wise Man or Woman.

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Tiamat

(Sumerian and Babylonian)

Tiamat, a goddess of the ocean, is described as the primordial mother of the gods in the Babylonian creation myth, *Enuma Elish*. Her consort in this myth is Apsu, the god of the subterranean waters.

The myth begins before the existence of the heavens and Earth, as the mother, Tiamat,

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and her husband, Apsu, mingled their waters together, creating their progeny. Their first two children were Lahmu and Lahamu. Later, the pair Anshar and Kishar were born, who then gave birth to Anu, the supreme god of heaven. Anu fathered Nudimmud, also known as Ea, the god of wisdom.

The noise created by the divine offspring greatly disturbed the goddess Tiamat, but she indulged her young. Apsu complained about loss of sleep at night and lack of rest during the day. Frustrated, angry, and pushed to his limit, Apsu decided to kill the deities.

When she heard of Apsu's decision, Tiamat urged tolerance, but to no avail. When the gods learned of Apsu's decision, they were stunned. The wise Ea decided that they must act. He fashioned a magic spell and placed it on Apsu, putting him into a deep slumber. Ea then bound both Apsu and Mummu, Apsu's vizier (or chief adviser). He killed Apsu and made Mummu a prisoner.

Tiamat and Marduk

Soon afterward, Marduk, the hero, was born to Ea and his wife, Damkina. Anu formed and produced four terrifying winds that he gave to Marduk. Marduk toyed with the winds, creating a storm that agitated Tiamat and kept her and her offspring awake. Tiamat's offspring complained bitterly to their mother to do something. They urged Tiamat to respond to Marduk's aggressive, provoking behavior.

Tiamat agreed and prepared for war. She gave birth to twelve monster serpents: three types of horned snakes, a snake-dragon, a hairy hero-man, a storm-beast, a lion-demon, a lion-man, a scorpion-man, the essence of fierce storms, a fish-man, and a bull-man. Tiamat appointed her lover, Qingu, as chief of these forces. She also gave him control over the tablet of destinies, which held the power to control divine authority as well as human life.

Tiamat assembled her creatures to prepare for battle. Her array of powers was so great that Ea was forced to go to Anshar, king of the gods, for advice. Anshar ordered Ea to subdue Tiamat, but Ea's powers were not strong enough to counter her spells. Finally, Ea summoned Marduk, who offered to champion the gods and fight against Tiamat.

The Battle with Marduk

Marduk challenged Tiamat to one-on-one combat. The two gods were soon locked in battle. Marduk spread out his net, encircled Tiamat in a trap, and released an ill wind toward her face. The wind entered Tiamat's mouth and bloated her belly. Marduk then shot an arrow into her belly. It cut her innards and pieced her heart. Marduk killed Tiamat, flung down her carcass, and stood on it. He smashed her remaining forces, captured Qingu, and took away the tablet of destinies.

Next, Marduk turned his attention to the body of Tiamat. He crushed her skull with his mace and cut open her arteries. He then split her body in two. He set up half of her body as a roof for the heavens and the other half as the surface of the earth. The Tigris and Euphrates rivers flowed from her eyes, and mountains were formed from her breasts.

As for Tiamat's twelve creatures, Marduk smashed their weapons and made statues of them to be set up before the gate of Apsu. Qingu was sentenced to death, and mankind was formed from his blood.

Storytellers may view this myth in several ways. Depending on the age and knowledge level of the audience, this story may be told as a psychological tale, a dragon-slaying tale, a creation tale, or a hero tale.

Ira Spar

See also: Mother Goddess/Earth Mother.

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Tibetan Storytelling

The Chinese occupation of Tibet, which began in 1951, led to a loss of many traditional practices, including storytelling. The wandering storytellers known as *lami manipas* or *lama manis* are no longer sanctioned by the current regime. Although they are not officially banned, their tradition, which dates back to perhaps the twelfth century C.E., is slowly dying out.

The lami manipas were traditionally of common birth and served a religious function. They traveled around Tibet carrying small shrines and sets of *thangkas,* which are traditional scrolls painted with religious themes.

The stories the lami manipas told were based on the paintings and served a dual purpose. They provided entertainment and educated the audience about the symbolism and meanings of the paintings and, through them, the traditional Tibetan Buddhist principles and legends. Whole villages would gather to hear these stories, especially during the holy month of the Buddha's birth, often chanting religious mantras together.

Another form of storytelling that has been exiled for its religious nature is a type of dance. There are two major types, *cham,* which is sacred monastic dancing meant to banish evil and bring blessings, and *achi lhamo,* the folk dances and operas that portray moral stories of good versus evil.

Despite the Chinese occupation, one traditional form of storytelling is very much alive in Tibet: the recitation of the Tibetan national epic, *Gesar of Ling*. This story of the hero-magician-king is known in all the Himalayan nations. In neighboring Ladakh it is known as *Kesar's Saga*.

One of the longest epics still in active recitation, the nearly 200 episodes may take a total of three months to recite. The episodes are recited only at night and in the winter, and several nights are required to complete each one. The recitation is performed by the visionary bards known as *drungpas* (male) and *drungmas* (female). It is said that in the past, the hoofprints of Gesar's horse might magically appear in a cleared circle around which the audience sat.

See also: Yeti; *Retelling: Geser.*

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Tolkien, J.R.R.

(1892–1973)

The English author John Ronald Reuel Tolkien is perhaps best known for his epic fantasy novel *The Lord of the Rings*.

Childhood

Tolkien was born on January 3, 1892, in Bloemfontein, South Africa, to Arthur Reuel Tolkien and Mabel Suffield Tolkien. His father died when the boy was four, and young John, his brother, Hilary, and their mother settled near Birmingham, England. Their mother joined the Roman Catholic Church soon after their return to England. She raised the boys in the new faith and cut them off from both sides of their Anglican family.

Tolkien's mother died in 1904, and Father Francis X. Morgan, of the Birmingham Oratory Church, made sure the boys were protected. They lived with an aunt for a time and then in a rooming house for orphans.

John had proven himself adept at language, mastering Latin and Greek at an early age. He later added Finnish to his repertoire.

Love and War

Tolkien's life was changed when, at sixteen, he met a fellow lodger at school named Edith Bratt. She was nineteen, and their friendship

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soon deepened. Tolkien, distracted by his new relationship, failed to gain admission to Oxford on his first attempt. This caused Father Francis to forbid Tolkien from having any contact with Miss Bratt until he was twenty-one.

Tolkien dutifully followed Father Francis's order and entered Oxford's Exeter College. As soon as he reached the proper age, Tolkien once again took up his relationship with Edith. She ended a previous engagement and converted to Catholicism.

The young couple's plans were interrupted by the outbreak of World War I. Tolkien did not immediately enlist. Instead, he finished his degree in June 1915. By then, he had completed his first invented language, Qenya, and was enthralled with lyric poetry.

Tolkien entered the army and was made second lieutenant. He and Edith married at last on March 22, 1916, before he shipped out to France. While at the front near the Somme River, Tolkien began to work on his epic mythology and contracted trench fever. He was discharged and returned home in November 1916.

Early Works and Career

Tolkien completed his first work of fantasy, *Book of Lost Tales,* during his recovery. He continued to refine his imaginary beings, their world, and their languages for the rest of his life. During Tolkien's extended recuperation, Edith gave birth to their first son, John Francis Reuel, in 1917.

Shortly after the end of the war, Tolkien left the service and took his first job, as assistant lexicographer for *The New English Dictionary* (later known as *The Oxford English Dictionary*). He then worked at the University of Leeds, where he taught English language and literature until 1925.

It was at Leeds that Tolkien collaborated with Eric Valentine Gordon on a highly regarded translation of the fourteenth-century poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Tolkien was also a founding member of the Viking Club, where students and teachers gathered to read Norse mythology and drink beer. During this period, Tolkien and his wife had two more sons, Michael Hilary Reuel and Christopher Reuel.

In 1925, Tolkien took a position at Oxford University, where he stayed until 1959. He enjoyed the academic life. During his time at Oxford, he helped found a group called the Inklings, which included the author C.S. Lewis. When he was not working, he continued to define his imaginary world and successfully raise a family. His only daughter, Priscilla, was born in 1929.

The Hobbit

As Tolkien told it, one day he was marking papers and found that a student had left an exam page blank. Professor Tolkien wrote on the page, "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit." Inspired, he went on to start a tale of adventure featuring the hobbit and his world.

Editor Susan Dagnall of the George Allen and Unwin publishing company saw an incomplete version of the book and asked the professor to finish it. After the publisher's ten-year-old son approved of the story—and earned a shilling for the effort—it was purchased. *The Hobbit* was published in 1937.

The Hobbit sold so well that the Unwin asked Tolkien if he had a sequel in mind. It took Tolkien sixteen years to complete his epic masterpiece, *The Lord of the Rings*. The novel, written in three parts—*The Fellowship of the Ring, The Two Towers,* and *The Return of the King*—was published in 1954 and 1955. Despite mixed reviews, it found an eager audience, which quickly grew after the production of a radio adaptation in 1956.

Widespread Success

The Lord of the Rings was more than a tale of men, wizards, trolls, dwarves, hobbits, and elves. Tolkien had been heavily influenced by his war experiences and what he saw as man's careless disregard for Earth's natural resources.

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Despite its epic scope and fantastic imagery, people identified with the work's tales of love, courage, and friendship. The latter theme was presented in myriad combinations, but most notably between the two hobbits, Frodo Baggins and Samwise Gamgee. Tolkien's deep knowledge of the English language led him to name characters and settings using ancient tongues, in addition to his own inventions.

A paperback edition of the work was published in 1965. An American publisher released the three parts as separate books and fell into a highly publicized copyright dispute with Tolkien's British publisher. The media attention caught the imagination of the American youth and propelled the book to cult status as sales skyrocketed.

Tolkien appreciated the notoriety and revenue, but he disliked being the object of attention. He and Edith relocated to Bournemouth on England's south coast in 1969, where they lived quietly until Edith died in 1971.

After Edith's death, Tolkien moved into rooms provided by Merton College. He died on September 2, 1973.

The Silmarillion

Tolkien spent his final years revising his mythology and trying to complete a more heavily mythic work, *The Silmarillion,* to his satisfaction. Working alongside him was his son Christopher, who spent twenty-five years editing and polishing this complete history of Middle Earth after his father's death. The work was never finished.

Tolkien's works gained an even wider audience with the worldwide success of director Peter Jackson's faithful three-film adaptation of the novel. The final film of the trilogy, *The Return of the King* (2003), was awarded eleven Academy Awards.

Bob Greenberger

See also: Fantasy.

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Tom Thumb

(English)

Tom Thumb is perhaps the earliest miniature human hero. One of the first stories written about the diminutive character dates from 1621, but he may well have existed in folklore long before that writing.

The most familiar version of Tom Thumb's story takes place in an Arthurian setting. The wizard Merlin is present at the birth of the thumb-sized boy. But the rest, the tongue-in-cheek exploits and too-cute clothing—a doublet made of thistledown and an oak-leaf hat—reflect the tone of the early seventeenth century. Tom Thumb is, in fact, reminiscent of the fairy folk of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (c. 1595–1596).

One of the earliest written versions of Tom Thumb's tale was *The History of Tom Thumbe the Little, for his small stature surnamed, King Arthvrs Dwarfe: Whose Life and aduentures containe many strange and wonderfull accidents, published for the delight of merry Time-spenders* (1621) by Richard Johnson. An anonymous verse version appeared in 1630 as *Tom Thumbe, His Life and Death: Wherein is declared many Marvailous Acts of Manhood, full of wonder, and strange merriments: Which the little Knight lived in King Arthurs time, and famous in the Court of Great-Brittaine.*

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In 1730 and 1731, the English author Henry Fielding wrote a play based on the story of Tom Thumb. He used it to satirize both heroic drama and government politics.

For 300 years, the tale has turned up in various forms, from plays to children's books. Bawdy elements relating to Tom's stature and fame with the ladies often were included, as was the mention of Merlin and King Arthur. The story has been given both tragic and happy endings. The former include Tom being swallowed by a cow or bitten by a venomous spider. The children's versions, however, usually omit both King Arthur and the tragic ending.

In the United States in the nineteenth century, there were two unique uses of the story. The famous showman P.T. Barnum featured in his show Charles Sherwood Stratton, who was just 25 inches (64 centimeters) tall, under the name General Tom Thumb. And in 1829, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad experimented with its first steam engine, which was called the Tom Thumb.

The story of Tom Thumb originated in England during the Middle Ages. In the nineteenth century, showman P.T. Barnum gave this performer the stage name of General Tom Thumb. His real name was Charles Sherwood Stratton (1838–1883). *(London Stereoscopic Company/Stringer/Getty Images)*

There seems to be something innately fascinating about the idea of miniature human life. The topic was explored in the movies *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957; 2008), *The Incredible Shrinking Woman* (1981; 1994), and *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* (1989).

Audiences' fascination with small beings, combined with the symbolism of the common man getting the better of the big men, make Tom Thumb an enduring character.

See also: No-Bigger-than-a-Finger; *Retelling: Tom Thumb's Adventures.*

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Tomte/Tomten/Tomtar

(Swedish)

Every farm in Sweden was said to have a *tomte* (the plural is *tomten* or *tomtar*), a helpful little being.

The tomte was about the size of a four-year-old child but had an old man's face and a long white or gray beard. He generally wore a knitted hat that resembled those found on garden gnomes, a jacket, knickers, red stockings, and sturdy shoes. In Finland, the tomte is called a *tontu.*

The folklore does not mention female tomten. There generally was only one tomte per household. A shy being, unwilling to be seen by humans, the tomte could make himself

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invisible. In some stories, this ability came from his hat, which he would twist around. This may be derived from the *tarnkap* or *tarnhelm* of invisibility, out of Norse and Germanic lore.

When he was treated nicely and when the farm animals were treated well, the tomte was happy and willingly took care of the home and farm, including the animals and people. The best way to reward him was to leave a bowl of rice pudding in the stable on Christmas night, which also may have served as a way of including the tomte in the festivities.

If the tomte was not treated with courtesy or the farm folk mistreated the animals, the tomte would become furious. And if he was mocked, he would see that some misfortune befell the mocker. This punishment varied from something relatively mild, such as tying the cows' tails into knots, to the more serious penalty of causing the harvest to fail or the cows' milk to go sour. The tomte even might abandon the farm altogether, leaving the farm folks to regret losing their helper.

The Christmas rice pudding tradition and an 1881 painting of a tomte by the Swedish illustrator Jenny Nystrom have led people to relate the tomte to Santa Claus. Santa sometimes is said to be helped not by elves but by tomten.

See also: Brownies.

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Tongue Twisters

Tongue twisters are alliterative rhymes or sentences that are difficult to say without making a mistake and are perfect for audience participation during a storytelling session. Tongue twisters are a multilingual phenomenon that can be found in almost all languages.

The point of a tongue twister, as every child knows, is to say it as quickly and as accurately as possible. A tongue twister may sound like a real sentence, such as "She sells seashells by the seashore." But it also may be a combination of words put together just to make the sentence difficult to say, such as "How much wood could a woodchuck chuck, if a woodchuck could chuck wood?"

Tongue twisters are often used in speech therapy, to help those with speech problems or those who are trying to diminish an accent. Creating tongue twisters is a common and enjoyable exercise that also can teach word skills.

Above all, tongue twisters have the primary purpose of being fun. Here are some samples from around the world:

France: Tongue twister in French is *virelangues*.
Je suis ce que je suis et si je suis ce que je suis, qu'est-ce que je suis? (I am what I am and if I am what I am, what am I?)

Spain: The Spanish word for tongue twister is *trabalenguas*.
¡Usted no nada nada? No, no traje traje. (Don't you swim? No, no swimming suit.)

Germany: The German word for tongue twister is *zungenbrecher*.
Kluge kleine Katzen kratzen keine Krokodile. (Clever little cats don't scratch crocodiles.)

China: The Mandarin for tongue twister is *jao k'ou ling*.
Ma ma qi ma, ma man, ma ma ma ma. (Mother is riding a horse. The horse moves slowly. Mother chides the horse.)

Indonesia: The words in Indonesian for tongue twister are *pelincah lidah*.
Kuku kaki kakekku kaku. (My grandfather's toenail is stiff.)

See also: Nonsense Rhymes.

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Tree Spirits

Many of the world's cultures have believed that trees had spirits. Among the earliest known spirits of this type were the dryads of Greek mythology. Dryads were nymphs, or nature spirits, who inhabited trees and presided over woodlands.

The word *dryad* means "oak spirit." The Greeks had other names for inhabitants of different types of trees, but they have fallen out of use. The name dryad currently refers to any tree spirit.

Hamadryads were a subset of tree nymphs. They were so closely bound to their trees that they lived only as long as their trees stood, dying when their trees fell or were cut down.

Female Tree Spirits

Usually appearing as beautiful young women, dryads and other nymphs often were pursued by satyrs and the nature god Pan. They were said to entrance humans as well. Eurydice, the doomed bride of Orpheus, was a dryad.

The mortal lovers Baucis and Philemon prayed to never be parted, even in death. Zeus answered their prayers and turned them into trees upon their deaths.

The god Apollo pursued the reluctant nymph Daphne, who transformed into a laurel tree to escape his attentions. Apollo consoled himself by claiming the laurel as his tree and weaving her leaves into a wreath. Laurel wreathes, real or symbolic, are still used as a prize for athletic prowess.

There are several examples of spirits and other beings that were trapped in trees. In some versions of the King Arthur myths, the sorceress Nimue locked Merlin inside a tree after he finished teaching her the secrets of his magic.

In Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* (c. 1611), the magician Prospero speaks of having rescued Ariel from a "cloven pine," where the spirit had been imprisoned by a witch. He then threatens to shut Ariel in an oak, presumably a more uncomfortable prison, if she does not submit to serving him.

The Green Man

In medieval Europe, the tree spirit appeared in the form of the Green Man (called *ghille-dhu* in Scotland). The Green Man has worn many guises.

In Arthurian legend, the terrifying Green Knight let Sir Gawain cut off his head, then put it back on and rode away, challenging Gawain to accept an axe blow from him in a year's time. Fertility figures, such as England's John Barleycorn, were sacrificed each year so the crops would grow.

Many Polynesian cultures include tales of a vegetable god who dies and is buried so food plants can grow from his body for a starving village. To the American Indians, all living things have a spirit, though they usually do not manifest as a separate being.

Evidence of the Green Man can be found in architecture around the world. Buildings in America and Europe are often decorated with faces sprouting leaves, vines, and flowers. Surprisingly, these images often appear on churches. It is unclear whether they were holdovers from pre-Christian traditions or were meant to represent Jesus's incarnation.

Sculptures from the Indian Jain tradition, which teaches kindness and reverence for all forms of life, including plants, depict human figures so entwined with vegetation that it is difficult to tell where one ends and the other begins.

The English author C.S. Lewis included dryads in his fantasy world of Narnia. J.R.R. Tolkien described sentient and often malevolent trees that were shepherded by the giant, treelike Ents in his *Lord of the Rings*

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(1954–1955). More recently, little white *kodama,* tree-dwelling nature spirits, played a small but crucial role in Hayao Miyazaki's animated film *Princess Mononoke* (1997).

Like animal spirits, dryads and other tree spirits remind us that there are more voices in the world than our own and that it is important to listen to them all.

Shanti Fader

See also: Adroanzi; Lutin.

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Tricksters

Tricksters are archetypical figures—basic images in the world's folklore, mythology, and popular culture. They may be divine or mortal, but they always exist as agents of pure change, characters who breaks taboos and laws without a thought and who lack the ordinary concept of human morality. The tricksters' greatest weapons are their quick wits.

Although a trickster may be the hero or heroine of a story, he or she is very different from the traditional hero of folktale, fairy tale, or myth. Traditional heroes are fearless, while tricksters often are cowards who trick or bribe others into fighting for them. Heroes are compassionate and loving, but tricksters usually are selfish, or at least appear to be so. And heroes seek to restore order, while tricksters do everything in their power to overturn it—as long as they can profit from the resulting chaos.

General Characteristics

One important function of the trickster in story is to teach the difference between right and wrong by pointing out correct and incorrect behaviors. Native American trickster tales, with a few exceptions, teach this way, through negative example: The outrageous behavior, stupidity, or unchecked appetite of characters such as Coyote, Rabbit, Turtle, and Inktomi shows an audience exactly what becomes of people who conduct themselves in similar ways.

Tricksters sometimes turn their attention and energy toward fighting against monsters or ridding a place of a corrupt leader. In these stories, a trickster's quick wit and silver tongue can be held up as an example of how to deal with adversity or extract oneself from a difficult situation.

A trickster also can succeed where traditional methods and wisdom fail. Since they are unpredictable, they are that much harder to foil. One Hindu tale tells of a compassionate Brahman who freed a tiger from a cage. The tiger tried to eat his benefactor (despite having promised while still in the cage that it would not) as the Brahman begged for his life. Grudgingly, the tiger agreed to spare the Brahman if he could find three creatures who agreed that it would be wrong to eat him. The Brahman tried in vain to find three advocates, but he did encounter a jackal who tricked the tiger back into its cage. Trickery succeeded where appealing to virtue had failed.

Tricksters often act as heroes for the underprivileged. While some tricksters are gods, kings, and queens, most are simple people—farmers, peasant girls, animals, thieves, gypsies, and wanderers. They represent the poor and oppressed, give power to those who are traditionally powerless, and help those who generally have no way to protect themselves when their rulers are corrupt.

Tricksters pit themselves against those who try to cheat the honest poor or who wield tyrannical power. One such corrupt official was the plantation master in the American folktales of High John the Conqueror. High John scored numerous victories against his master, some trivial, some not, on behalf of all the slaves who had to bend their heads and obey.

Female Tricksters

While female trickster figures are less common than male tricksters, they are far from

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absent in world myth and folklore. Female tricksters tend to fall into one of two categories: clever wives or daughters who use their wits to save their family, or wronged wives who must resort to trickery to prove their innocence and win back their beloved.

Clever wife or daughter tricksters can answer difficult questions that stump their husbands or fathers. In one tale that appears in many different cultures, a king threatened to take a poor family's home and land unless one of them appeared before him neither dressed nor naked, neither riding nor walking, and bringing him a gift that was not a gift. The clever daughter wrapped herself in a fishnet, appeared on the back of a goat with her feet brushing the ground, and offered the king a bird that flew away when released from its basket. The king was so impressed that he not only returned the land but also married the clever daughter.

The character of the wronged wife generally turns to trickery out of necessity. The husband brags about his wife's fidelity, or decides to test it, and a friend tries in vain to seduce her. The friend then bribes someone, often an elderly woman, to gain the faithful wife's confidence and learn some intimate secret about her—a description of her bedroom, or a mark on her body. The friend then presents this information to the husband as proof of his conquest. The husband believes the man and throws his wife out of their home, despite her protests of innocence. The wronged wife often disguises herself as a man, taking on the role of warrior, judge, or sage in order to learn how she was tricked. She then returns to set up an elaborate show that reveals the would-be seducer's falsehood and proves her chastity.

A third type of female trickster is the unfaithful wife. This character resorts to trickery to hide her infidelity from her husband. In most cases, this woman is tricked in return, and both she and her lover are punished.

One of the most famous female tricksters is Scheherazade, the central character in *The Thousand and One Nights* or *The Arabian Nights*. Scheherazade was married to a jealous and embittered man, King Shahryar, who had killed each of his previous wives the morning after their wedding. Scheherazade managed to stay alive by telling a story each night that ended on a dramatic cliffhanger. The king was so eager to learn what happened next that he let her live another night to finish the story, and so on for the thousand and one nights.

It is interesting to note that while most traditional stories involving love end with a wedding, stories featuring female tricksters sometimes go further and portray married life, with its compromises and strife. Perhaps the lesson here is that the spirit of the trickster is needed in life beyond the wedding day.

Western Tradition

The Greek god Hermes was a trickster. Within days of his birth, Hermes stole a flock of cattle from his brother, Apollo, and reversed his footprints to hide the deed. When the angry Apollo eventually found his little brother and demanded that he return the cattle, Hermes made peace by giving Apollo the lyre, or harp, that he had fashioned from a turtle shell. Hermes was allowed to keep the cattle.

The Norse pantheon also had a trickster, called Loki. But while Hermes eventually learned to behave himself and became the messenger of Olympus, Loki was a more malevolent force. Loki gladly cheated the giants who built Midgard, the home of the gods, out of their payment. He also tricked the blind god, Höd, into killing his half brother, Balder, who was the most beloved of the gods. Loki eventually was punished by the other gods, who bound him under the earth, but it was too late—he already had sired the monsters that would eventually bring about the gods' destruction.

In Europe, perhaps the most famous trickster is the ubiquitous Jack. He is best known for planting a magic beanstalk and then robbing the giant who lived at the beanstalk's top. The Flemish trickster-fool Till Eulenspiegel told fortunes and wandered around playing pranks on the rich and pompous.

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Somewhat nastier is the Danish trickster Little Claus, who was a character in the Hans Christian Andersen story "Little Claus and Big Claus." Little Claus convinced his neighbor Big Claus to slaughter all his cattle and murder his old grandmother. Little Claus then persuaded Big Claus to throw himself into a river by describing the fabulous city that lay at the bottom.

Eastern Tricksters

Hindu mythology has the trickster god, Krishna, who was the eighth incarnation of the compassionate preserver god, Vishnu. As a child, Krishna stole butter from his mother and neighbors. When he was a young man, he stole the clothing of the village cowherd women, called *gopis,* while they bathed in the river. At night, he would play his flute, and the gopis would rise from their husbands' beds and run into the forest to dance in a holy frenzy around him.

In the Chinese legend of Monkey, an audacious warrior and magician tried to leap to the end of the earth. He succeeded only in leaping to the edge of the Buddha's hand, where he marked his supposed triumph by urinating on the Buddha's finger.

Japanese tricksters often are more malicious. Examples include the shape-shifting fox and *tenuki* (badger) spirits, who play tricks on humans.

In the Middle East, there are a number of stories of Jewish tricksters. The great Hebrew King Solomon appeared in a trickster's role in some stories, as in the famous tale of the child claimed by two women. By offering to cut the child in half and watching the reactions of the two women, Solomon was able to determine who the real mother was.

From Africa to America

One of the best-known African tricksters is Anansi, the spider. Though tiny and weak, Anansi is clever enough to trick the powerful tiger into giving up his box of stories, thus making Anansi the keeper of wisdom. To win the box of stories, Anansi had to accomplish three impossible tasks. Instead of seeking supernatural help, Anansi used his wits.

Downtrodden and utterly without rights or liberty, African slaves in early America loved trickster tales and wove them into the culture they shaped for themselves. Many of their stories were animal tales, often modeled after African or Native American stories. These included the fearless and inventive Brer Rabbit, who could talk his way out of any trouble. The Brer Rabbit story, in which the rabbit is caught and tricks his captor into throwing him into a briar patch, is based on a Cherokee rabbit tale.

Many Native American tricksters are animals: Raven, in the Pacific Northwest; Inktomi, the spider trickster of the Sioux; Rabbit, among the Cherokee; and perhaps the best-known trickster of all, Coyote. Coyote appears in the stories of many Native American tribes, including the Navajo, Hopi, Zuni, and Nez Percé.

Some of these tribes honor Coyote as a creator with the power to sing and unsing the entire world, as well as a protector who destroys monsters using his wits and magic. Others paint Coyote as a bumbling fool whose plans consistently backfire, or as amoral, greedy, and lecherous, forever undone by his boundless appetites. Many books and collections of stories are devoted to the exploits of Coyote. He is portrayed either as the trickster or as the tricked one, and sometimes he shifts between the two roles, even within the same story.

Tricksters cross boundaries and ignore what is proper. They dance outside the lines of what is acceptable. In doing so, they shatter our dull routines and our preconceptions. Perhaps most important, tricksters can make us laugh at our own foolishness. It is no wonder that they are such popular and enduring figures.

Shanti Fader

See also: Anansasem; Archetype; Gremlins; Hermes; Lange Wapper; Leprechauns; Leshy, Leshiye; Lutin; Maui; Ravens and Crows; Reynard the Fox.

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Tristan and Isolde

(Celtic)

In the story of Tristan and Isolde, a pair of star-crossed lovers, Sir Tristan (also Tristram or Tristrem) was sent to Ireland to bring Isolde the Fair (also Yseult or Iseult) back with him to Cornwall to wed his uncle, King Mark.

A magic potion that Tristan and Isolde unwittingly swallowed bound them together in eternal love. After many trysts and difficulties, not the least of which was the anger of King Mark, the lovers separated, or were forced apart. In some versions, Tristan married another Isolde, Isolde of the White Hands.

In all versions, Tristan later lay dying of a battle wound. He sent for Isolde the Fair. Deceived into believing she would not come, or after she deliberately delayed her coming, Tristran died of despair. Isolde, finding her lover dead, died of grief beside him.

There are versions of this medieval romance from many countries, including England, France, and Germany. The earliest existing written version is in Anglo-Norman French verse, authored by Thomas of Britain in about 1185. Gottfried von Strassburg wrote a German version of the story in about 1210. The story was originally not part of the Arthurian cycle but somehow entered that legend. In the fifteenth century, Sir Thomas Malory included a version of Tristan and Isolde in his classic *Morte d'Arthur*.

The story is mainly Irish in origin. It bears a strong resemblance to the Irish tales of Deirdre, in which the lovers Deirdre and Naoise flee from King Concobar. It is also similar to stories of the lovers Grainne and Diarmid, who fled from Fionn McCumhail.

There are numerous modern versions of the story, including Matthew Arnold's *Tristram and Iseult* (1852), A.C. Swinburne's *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882), and Joseph Bédier's retelling, *Tristan and Iseult* (1900). Richard Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde* premiered in 1865.

See also: King Arthur; Tale Types.

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Trojan War

(Greek)

The Trojan War was a conflict between the united forces of ancient Greece and the powerful Anatolian trading city of Troy. Legend places the war at about 1200 B.C.E. It is not known whether the events actually took place as written, were purely mythological, or were partially based on a real war.

According to Greek mythology, the war began with an insult to a goddess. At the wedding of mortal King Peleus of Phthia and the sea nymph Thetis, all the gods and goddesses were invited—except one, Eris, goddess of discord. Eris was insulted by the omission and plotted to cause trouble. She created a beautiful golden apple and inscribed on it, "For the most beautiful." She then sent the lovely apple to the feast, sat back, and watched.

As Eris had expected, three of the goddesses, Hera, queen of the gods, Athena, goddess of wisdom, and Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty, promptly claimed the apple. They quarreled over it without coming to a resolution. Before matters got out of hand, they called upon Paris, a son of King Priam of Troy,

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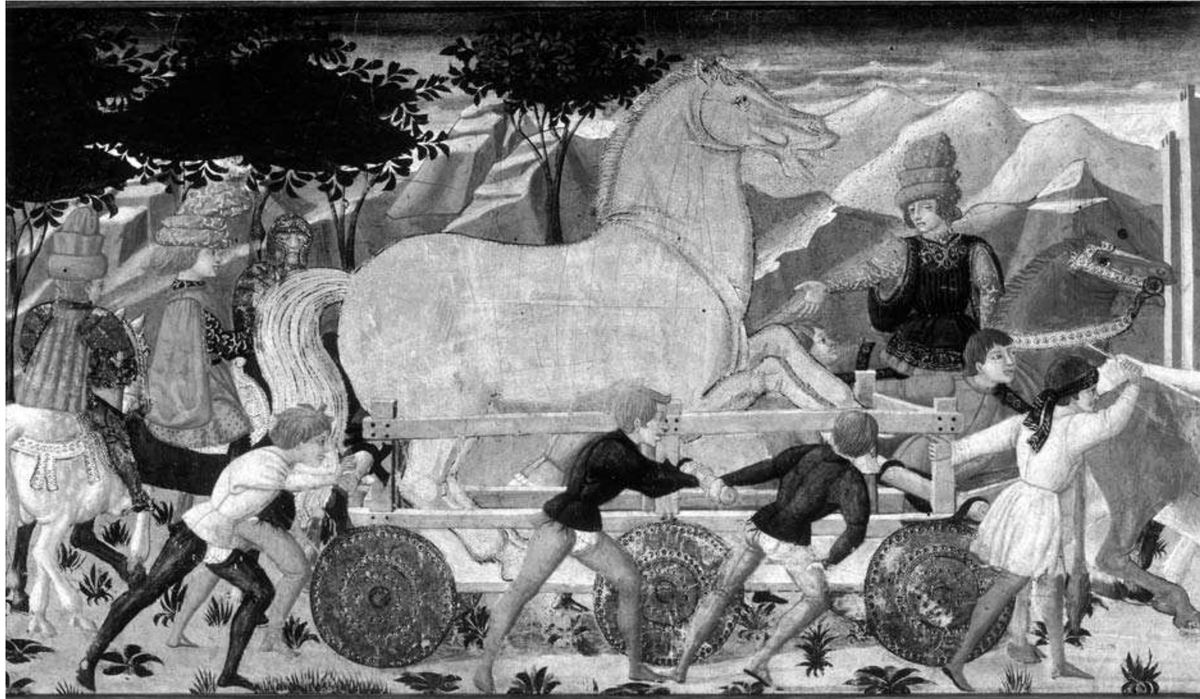

This fifteenth-century painting on wood shows a scene from the Trojan War in which the Trojans drag the great horse into their city, never guessing that it is full of Greek warriors. *(Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY)*

to judge the impromptu beauty contest. Paris was in a dangerous position, but he boldly awarded the apple to Aphrodite because she promised him Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world.

Paris and Helen

Helen was already married to King Menelaus of Sparta. But when Paris arrived in her husband's court, Helen promptly fell in love with him. Helen was either abducted or willingly fled with Paris to Troy. Menelaus and his brother Agamemnon, who was married to Helen's sister, Clytemnestra, organized a large Greek expedition against Troy to win Helen back. The Greek army included the notable heroes Achilles and Odysseus.

The walls of Troy proved to be impenetrable. The Greek army laid siege for ten years without success. Because of this frustrating situation, trouble arose in the Greek camp. The great Achilles refused to fight because he felt that Agamemnon, the Greek commander, had insulted him. Without Achilles, the Trojans, led by Hector, son of King Priam, were able to attack and drive the Greeks back to their ships. But when Hector slew Achilles's best friend, Patroclus, Achilles returned to combat and killed Hector to avenge Patroclus's death.

The Trojans had received help from their two allies, the Ethiopians and the Amazons. But Achilles demoralized the allies by killing Penthesilea, queen of the Amazons, and Memnon, king of the Ethiopians. But then Paris, aided by the god Apollo, shot an arrow at Achilles, hit his one vulnerable point, his heel, and killed him.

The Trojan Horse

The siege continued. Odysseus, who had not wanted to go to war and desperately wanted to get home, finally came up with a scheme to get the Greeks inside the Trojan walls. The Greeks built a huge wooden horse, now known as the Trojan horse, and placed it outside the walls of Troy. The horse was hollow, and Odysseus and several other warriors hid inside

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while the rest of the Greek army sailed away, appearing to retreat.

Cassandra, daughter of King Priam, had the gift of prophecy, which she had gained from the god Apollo. But because she had refused Apollo's advances, the god put a curse on her so that no one would believe her prophecies. Cassandra warned the Trojans that they must not take this horse into their city, but no one listened to her. The rejoicing Trojans, sure the horse was a token of the Greek surrender, pulled the horse into Troy.

That night, the Trojans fell asleep after celebrating their apparent victory. Odysseus and the others stole out of the horse and opened the city gates for the rest of the Greek warriors, who had returned from a nearby island.

The Greeks stormed into Troy and massacred the Trojans, killing most of the men and enslaving the women, including Cassandra. They burned the city and took back Helen. The Trojan War was over at last.

Works Inspired by the Trojan War

The story of the Trojan War has inspired storytellers, playwrights, writers, and composers throughout the ages. The plots of the epic works the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* center around the war, and various Greek playwrights took the war for their subject. Among the plays are Euripides's sympathetic treatment of the victims of war in *Hecuba* (named for King Priam's wife) and *The Trojan Women*. The Roman poet Virgil added a new dimension to the story by inventing another Trojan prince, Aeneus, and writing the *Aeneid* about his adventures.

In the nineteenth century, Hector Berlioz composed an opera, *Les Troyens*. Irish writer James Joyce loosely based his novel *Ulysses* (the Roman name for Odysseus), first published in serial form from 1918 to 1920, on the story of Odysseus.

Historians and archaeologists have yet to find definitive proof of an actual war. Troy existed at a strategic point overlooking the entrance to the Black Sea, but its walls were breached and it was ruined not once, but several times. There may have been several small battles fought against the Greeks, or there actually may have been one large war. If there was a major Trojan War, it was most likely fought over trade, not Helen.

See also: *Iliad.*

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Troubadours

(French)

Troubadours were composers and professional singers of medieval Europe. They are believed to have originated in eleventh-century France. The first troubadour may well have been William IX, Duke of Aquitaine, who was known as a songwriter.

The word *troubadour* comes from the French verb *trobar,* meaning "to find" or "to compose." The themes of troubadours' songs ranged from the adventures of gallant knights to romantic ballads of courtly love. Their songs were often, though not always, secular and were sung in the regional vernacular. Since many troubadours created true narrative ballads, they also can be considered storytellers.

The troubadours rarely had fixed residences. They wandered the land, passing along news, songs, and stories as they went. The image of the wandering troubadour has been romanticized over time.

Perhaps the most familiar story about a troubadour is that of Blondel. Jean de Nesle, whose nickname, Blondel, referred to someone with flowing blond hair, was either a troubadour at the court of King Richard I of England or the monarch's personal friend. The stories claim that when Richard returned

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from the Crusades, he was taken prisoner in what is now Germany. Blondel went in search of him, singing a song only the two of them knew. When Blondel finally heard Richard's voice singing the song from a barred tower window, Blondel knew he had found his king and returned to England with the news. This tale is almost certainly fiction, but it is true that Richard ceded land to someone named Blondel; whether or not this was the troubadour is unknown.

Another troubadour has earned a footnote in modern musical history. In the thirteenth century, Adam de la Halle became the first of the troubadours known to compose only secular music. He was the author of the first musical comedy, *Le Jeu de Robin et Marion* (*The Play of Robin and Marion*). This light tale tells of a girl who chooses her true love over a wealthy knight. The play and its songs still can be found in print and recently have been recorded.

See also: Jongleurs; Minstrels.

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Truth and Falsehood, The Tale of

(Egyptian)

The Tale of Truth and Falsehood, an allegorical Egyptian tale, dates to the nineteenth dynasty (c. 1315–1201 B.C.E.).

In the lost opening to the story, Falsehood complained to the Great Ennead of Heliopolis (the nine gods of Heliopolis) that his elder brother, Truth, had stolen a marvelous dagger from him. According to Falsehood, all the copper from Mount Yal and all the trees in the forest of Coptus had gone into the creation of this dagger. At the behest of Falsehood, the nine gods blinded Truth and assigned him to act as his brother's doorkeeper.

Falsehood soon grew tired of seeing his virtuous brother sitting at his threshold. He ordered two servants to cast him out where lions would eat him. Truth asked the men to spare him, and, through adventures that have not been preserved, he succeeded in avoiding this fate. A lady whose servants had found Truth lying in the brush was struck by his handsome appearance. She made him her doorkeeper and slept with him one night.

The lady gave birth to a godlike son. The boy excelled at writing, as well as at the art of war, arousing the envy of the older schoolboys. They taunted him, saying "You don't have a father!"

So the young man went to his mother demanding to know who his father was. When he discovered that his father was none other than their blind doorkeeper, he was enraged. He brought Truth into the house and promised vengeance on whoever had blinded him. Truth told his son that Falsehood was responsible, so the young man formulated a plan.

Truth's son paid Falsehood's herdsman to guard an exceptionally beautiful ox. Some months later, Falsehood noticed the fine ox in his herd and decided to eat it, although the herdsman warned him that it belonged to someone else. When word of Falsehood's deed reached Truth's son, the youth took his case before the ennead.

"My ox," he said, "was so big that the horns stretched from the eastern mountain to the western mountain. The Nile was its bed, and sixty calves were born to it each day." The ennead did not believe that such a creature existed. Truth's son then asked Falsehood if there had ever been a dagger so big that all the copper of a mountain and all the trees in a forest went into its manufacture. The gods again were charged with judging between Truth and Falsehood.

Believing that his brother had been eaten by lions long ago, Falsehood vowed that if Truth were still alive, then he should be blinded

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and made to serve his older brother. Shown by the boy that Truth was still alive, the gods blinded Falsehood and appointed him Truth's doorkeeper.

Noreen Doyle

See also: Tale Types.

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Twin Brothers

The "twin brothers" is a world folktale type in which the basic elements are the same from culture to culture, but the details can differ widely.

Twin sets of boys, hounds, and horses were born. This was usually the result of magic, whether accidental, as in their mothers eating magic fruit, or deliberate. In some cases, it was the result of a magic fish that was caught three times. Upon being caught a third time, the fish told the fisherman to divide it in three and feed it to his wife, his hound, and his mare.

The boys grew up, either normally or with miraculous speed, and were given twin swords. The two young men set out to find adventure on separate paths after exchanging tokens or learning signs that would tell either brother if the other was in trouble. The tokens or signs ranged from a knife blade that would turn black or rusty to tracks suddenly filling with blood.

The first brother rescued and married a princess. He was then lured away from her side by a witch or demon, who either imprisoned him or turned him to stone.

The second brother saw from the token or learning sign that his twin was in deadly danger and went hunting for him. He met his brother's wife, who took this twin for her husband, but he was too honorable to take advantage of her. Instead, he went on to disenchant his brother.

But that brother, smitten by jealousy, instantly thought he had been betrayed. In many versions, he killed his twin. Then, learning the truth a bit too late, the surviving twin killed the witch (or demon), and his brother was returned to life. In an alternate ending, the brother was returned to life through a magic potion.

Variations of this basic story have been found throughout Europe and in Greece, Turkey, India, and Indonesia. The story is also known in North America and the Caribbean, having been brought to the New World by immigrants.

See also: Motifs.

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Two Brothers, Tale of the

(Egyptian)

The ancient Egyptian source for the *Tale of the Two Brothers,* commonly referred to as "the oldest fairy tale in the world," was written at the end of the nineteenth dynasty (early thirteenth century B.C.E.). This tale of two brothers and their wives is an early incarnation of the poor-boy-becomes-prosperous motif that became popular in later European folktales.

The characters are identifiable with one or more of the Egyptian deities: The elder brother, Anpu, can be identified with Anubis; the younger brother, Bata, with Osiris, an older funerary deity named Bata, or Seth; and the unnamed two wives with forms of Hathor.

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A parallel with the biblical tale of Samson and Delilah also can be drawn.

The Betrayal

Anpu, Bata, and Anpu's wife lived together in Anpu's house. Bata was exceptionally handsome and strong and understood the language of cattle. One day, while fetching seed grain, Bata encountered his brother's wife braiding her hair. His ability to carry five sacks greatly impressed Anpu's wife, who offered herself to him. This repulsed Bata, who thought of this woman as his mother. He promised to keep her attempted adultery a secret.

While the two brothers were sowing in the fields, Anpu's wife applied fat and grease to her body to give the appearance of bruises. Arriving home, Anpu found his wife lying in the darkened house, vomiting and injured. She claimed that Bata had made unwanted advances toward her and beat her into silence. If Anpu refused to kill him, she would die.

Infuriated by these allegations, Anpu took a spear and waited for his brother in the stable. When Bata brought the cows in from the fields, the animals saw Anpu hiding behind the door and warned Bata of the danger. Bata fled, with Anpu in pursuit. The god Re-Horakhty heard Bata's prayers and separated the brothers with a body of crocodile-infested water.

Bata explained to his brother what had really transpired. He was deeply hurt that Anpu would take the word of a "filthy whore" above that of his own brother. To demonstrate his grief, Bata cuts off his penis. He threw his member into the water, where it was eaten by a fish. Anpu was consumed with sorrow, but Bata told him to go home to take care of the cattle.

Bata announced that he would go to the Valley of the Pine, where he would place his heart on the blossom of a pine tree. If that tree was ever felled, Bata would die. Anpu would receive a sign on Bata's death: A jug of beer in Anpu's hand would begin to foam. On receiving this sign, Anpu should seek Bata's heart and, upon finding it, put the heart into a bowl of cool water so that Bata might live again.

Bata's Wife

The brothers went their separate ways. Bata settled down in the Valley of the Pine, initially dwelling under the pine tree that bore his heart but eventually building a house.

The Great Ennead of Heliopolis (nine gods of Heliopolis) visited Bata with news that Anpu had slain his wife and thrown her corpse to the dogs. They also provided Bata with a wife, made by the god Khnum, and told Bata that his wife's fate was to die by the knife. Bata provided for his new wife and told her the secret of his heart. He also warned her not to leave the house, because the sea might seize her, and Bata, castrated, was unable to fight the sea.

But Bata's wife did leave the house, and the sea did attempt to catch her. She escaped back into the house, but not before the pine, at the sea's request, snagged a lock of her hair. The sea brought the hair to the place where the royal laundrymen washed the king's linens, and a marvelous odor impregnated the clothes. The king, who was told that the scented hair must come from a daughter of Re-Horakhty, dispatched messengers abroad to seek out this woman.

Bata killed all but one of the messengers. This last messenger returned to Egypt and told the king that Bata had killed the others. The king sent an army to the valley. The army returned with the woman, Bata's wife, and the people rejoiced. She instructed the king to have the pine felled and destroyed. When this was done, Bata fell dead.

Recognizing the sign of his brother's death, Anpu armed himself and set off for the valley, where he found Bata lying dead in the house. For three years, Anpu sought Bata's heart. Just as he was about to give up and return to Egypt, he discovered it. Anpu placed the heart in water, and Bata's body trembled. He drank the water and recovered. Bata enlisted Anpu in a plan for revenge against his traitorous wife.

The Brothers Unite

Bata transformed into a beautiful bull. Anpu rode him to the palace, where the king and all

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the people praised the fine animal. The king rewarded Anpu with silver and gold, and Anpu became a close friend of the king.

One day, Bata the bull entered the kitchen, where he met the noble lady who had been his wife. "See, I live again," he told her, making her greatly afraid. She tricked the king into promising to give her anything she wished. Then, she asked to eat the liver of the bull.

Although he was deeply upset by this request, the king sacrificed the bull. Two drops of the bull's blood fell beside the palace gate. Overnight, two trees, called persea trees, grew up, which caused great rejoicing throughout Egypt.

One day, when the king and the noblewoman were honoring the persea trees, Bata again announced himself to his former wife. Yet again the noblewoman tricked the king into granting her wish. This time, the two persea trees were cut down to be made into furniture.

As the noblewoman watched the felling, a splinter flew into her mouth. As a result, she was impregnated and gave birth to a son, and again the king and Egypt rejoiced. The king loved the boy greatly and appointed him viceroy of Nubia and, later, crown prince. After many years the king died, and his son became king.

The newly crowned king made known all that had happened to him. He passed judgment on the noblewoman and appointed Anpu crown prince. He reigned for thirty years. On the day of his death, Anpu became king.

Noreen Doyle

See also: Tale Types.

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Typhon

(Greek)

In Greek mythology, Typhon was a dragon-like monster that tried to wrest control of the heavens from Zeus, king of the gods.

In Greek mythology, the monstrous Typhon tried unsuccessfully to steal power from Zeus, chief of the gods. This illustration shows Zeus and Typhon in combat. Zeus appears poised to win. *(Foto Marburg/Art Resource, NY)*

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Typhon was a massive creature, winged and breathing fire, with a man's body from the head to the thighs, and coils of vipers for legs. He was the offspring of Gaia, the earth, and Tartarus, the lowest realm of being.

Typhon attacked heaven with roars, hurling blazing rocks and breathing great blasts of fire. When the gods on Mount Olympus saw him rushing at them, they fled in the shapes of animals.

Only Zeus stood his ground, hurling thunderbolts at the monster and then attacking him with a sickle. It was a savage fight that covered all the land that now is Greece. At times, it seemed as though Typhon would win.

But at last, Zeus cast Mount Etna down upon Typhon, trapping him forever. To this day, the blasts of fire that shoot up from Mount Etna are said to be the remnants of Zeus's thunderbolts and Typhon's fire.

See also: Dragons.

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Ugly Baby

Every mother thinks her child is beautiful, even if everyone else disagrees. This truism can be found in stories and folktales from around the world, as well as in various folk jokes. Storytellers can share these jokes and tales from either a sympathetic or cynical point of view, depending on the situation.

The sixth-century Greek fabulist Aesop told the story of Zeus and the monkey, in which the god offered a prize to the mother with the most beautiful offspring. Among the other animals came the monkey, with her hairless, flat-nosed, ugly baby in her arms. When they saw it, the gods all laughed. But the monkey hugged her little one to her and said, "Zeus may give the prize to whomever he likes. But I shall always think my baby the most beautiful of them all."

Haitian folklore agrees with Aesop. A Haitian proverb states, "*Makak pa janm kwe petit-li led,*" or "A monkey never thinks her baby is ugly."

European Fables and Folktales

French fabulist Jean de La Fontaine told of a rather tragic misunderstanding between an eagle and an owl. The eagle agreed not to eat the owl's babies if the owl would only describe them. The owl spoke of the most beautiful babies in the world, and the eagle agreed not to eat them. But the eagle did eat the owlets. When confronted by the owl, the eagle could not understand the fuss: To him, the babies had been truly ugly.

In a Norwegian folktale, a hunter agrees not to kill a snipe's "beautiful" babies. After the hunter kills the ugly babies, the snipe mourns, as every child is beautiful to its mother.

A Romanian folktale has a happier ending, in which God sees the crow's babies and wonders how he could have created such ugly things. The mother crow defends them. God agrees that every mother sees her babies as beautiful and blesses the crows.

Ugly Baby Jokes

There are also several related folk jokes about ugly babies.

> *Woman, crying:* Everyone thinks my baby is ugly!
> *Man:* Aw, he isn't. And here's a banana for your monkey.
>
> A minister schooled himself not to react to ugly babies but to smile at them and say innocuously, "Now, *that's* a baby!" But one day, confronted by a truly hideous baby, he heard himself say, to his horror, "*Now, that's a baby?*"

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> A woman got on a bus holding a baby. The bus driver said, "That's the ugliest baby I've ever seen!"
>
> In a huff, the woman slammed her fare into the fare box and took an aisle seat near the rear of the bus. She fumed for a few stops and started getting really worked up. The man seated next to her sensed she was agitated and asked her what was wrong.
>
> "The bus driver insulted me!" she fumed.
>
> The man sympathized and said, "Hey! He's a public servant, and he shouldn't say things to insult the passengers."
>
> "You're right!" said the mother. "I think I'll go back up there and give him a piece of my mind."
>
> "That's a good idea," the man said. "Here, let me hold your monkey!"
>
> Every so often a baby is born that is so horrifyingly ugly, the father screams, "Put it back, put it back, put it back!"

Of course, anyone using ugly baby jokes in his or her repertoire had better first make sure that no one in the audience is holding an ugly baby.

See also: Tall Tales; Urban Legends.

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Ullikummi

(Hittite)

In Hittite mythology, Ullikummi was born from the mating of the god Kumarbi with the Rock, a sentient boulder. Ullikummi, made entirely of diorite, a type of dark, coarse-grained rock, had been created as a weapon to defeat the storm god and his allies. To hide him from the storm god, the sun god, and Ishtar, the goddess of fertility, Kumarbi placed him on the shoulder of Upelluri, the dreaming god, where he grew an acre in a month.

After fifteen days, Ullikummi had grown enough to stand waist deep in the sea, which is where the sun god first spotted him. Warned by the sun god, the storm god fought Ullikummi on Mount Imgarra, but the battle had no clear victor. Then, Ullikummi drove the goddess Hebat out of her temple. An army of seventy gods attacked him, and they all plunged off the mountain, falling down into the sea.

Ullikummi rose out of the sea, a huge 31,000 miles (about 9,000 leagues) tall. He towered over the city of Kummiya. Ea, god of the sky, cut off Ullikummi's feet with the copper knife that had separated the heavens from the earth. Despite his wounds, Ullikummi still boasted that he would take the kingship of heaven.

Although no complete text remains, it seems clear that despite his boasts, Ullikummi was defeated.

Ira Spar

See also: Giants.

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Unicorns

Unicorns are fabulous creatures, beautiful symbols of immortality, power, justice, and purity. They are said to resemble a horse, goat, or deer with a long, shining horn in the center of the forehead.

Usually depicted as pure white in the West and multicolored in the East, unicorns were once believed to be native to India. However, folklore about unicorns, as well as reputed

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physical sightings, can be found throughout the world.

The Unicorn in the Classical World

In 416 B.C.E., the Greek physician Ctesias left his native Cnidus to tend to the ailing Persian King Darius II. After eighteen years in Persia, Ctesias returned to Cnidus and wrote a book describing his travels. Of the unicorn, which he had not actually seen, Ctesias wrote,

> There are in India certain wild asses which are as large as horses, and larger. Their bodies are white, their heads are dark red, and their eyes dark blue. They have a horn on the forehead which is about eighteen inches in length. The dust filed from this horn is administered in a potion as a protection against deadly drugs.

About a century later, the Ionian historian Megasthenes visited India. The four books of his work *Indika* offered educated Greeks the most complete account of India available. This work is now lost, and only extracts remain, cited in writings of other scholars. Megasthenes described an Indian unicorn, called a *cartazoon,* even though, like Ctesias, he had never actually seen one. He stated that the cartazoon, which kept to itself in the mountains, had a black, spiral horn and excellent hooves. Megasthenes described the unicorn as gentle toward other species of animals, yet likely to engage in battles to the death with other unicorns.

Another notable Greek historian who wrote about the existence of unicorns was Herodotus. Writing in the third century B.C.E., he commented on the "horned ass" of Africa.

Although the philosopher Aristotle criticized Ctesias's writing, he never denied the existence of one-horned creatures. Aristotle characterized the different types of unicorns by the kind of hooves they possessed, and mentioned, in particular, two types of one-horned animals. The first was a sort of antelope, while the second, the so-called Indian ass, more closely resembled a horse. It is possible that, given Aristotle's authority, subsequent generations of naturalists and mythographers conflated his descriptions of two different one-horned creatures into the figure we now know as the unicorn.

Aristotle's student Alexander the Great once boasted that he rode a unicorn into battle.

The Unicorn in the Roman Empire

Julius Caesar, the Roman ruler and general, who lived during the first-century B.C.E., claimed in his work *De Bello Gallico* (*The Gallic War*) that unicorns could be found in the Hercynian Forest in southwestern Germany. Apollonius of Tyana, a Greek writer who lived close to the time of Caesar, claimed to have seen a unicorn in India.

The Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder, who died during the eruption of Mount Etna in 79 C.E., gave the description that has influenced most subsequent portrayals of unicorns in the West. According to Pliny, the unicorn, or monoceros, was a very ferocious beast, similar "in the rest of its body to a horse, with the head of a deer, the feet of an elephant, the tail of a boar, a deep, bellowing voice, and a single black horn, two cubits in length, standing out in the middle of its forehead." He added that it could not be taken alive. Pliny very possibly may have been confusing his monoceros with the rhinoceros.

The Roman natural philosopher Aelian wrote about unicorns several times. In one passage, he described a creature resembling a wild ass. It was about the size of a horse, with a white body, red head, and blue eyes. He elaborated on Ctesias's description of the unicorn's horn, saying that the horn was white at the base, crimson at the top, and black in the middle. Aelian also claimed that the Indians used the horns as drinking cups, which they believed kept them safe from convulsions and the holy disease, epilepsy, as well as from poisons. Like Ctesias, Aelian claimed that the

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unicorns lived in the mountains of the Indian interior that were inaccessible to men.

The Unicorn in the Bible and in Biblical Folklore

The King James Version of the Bible includes six specific references to unicorns.

> Numbers 23:22: "hath as it were the strength of an unicorn."
>
> Numbers 24:8: "the strength of an unicorn: he shall eat up"
>
> Job 39:9: "Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee?"
>
> Job 39:10: "Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band?"
>
> Psalm 29:6: "a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn."
>
> Psalm 92:10: "with the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed"

These biblical references to *unicornis* reflect the Latin translation of the Hebrew word *re'em,* which was used as a metaphor for strength. Later versions of the Bible have no references to unicorns, although the goat with a prominent horn between his eyes in the book of Daniel does seem distinctly unicorn-like. In the later versions, the word *re'em* has been translated to mean wild ox, as in Numbers 23:22, "He has as it were the strength of the wild ox."

Nevertheless, the unicorn seems to have left its tracks in Judeo-Christian tradition. Jewish folklore calls the unicorn the fiercest of all animals, able to kill an elephant with a single thrust from its horn. Certain stories claim that the unicorn was the first animal named and that it accompanied Adam and Eve into exile.

Some stories say that the unicorn did not make it onto Noah's ark and thus perished in the flood waters. Others versions say that Noah brought the unicorns onto the ark, but they demanded so much space and attention that he banished them. Their fate upon leaving the ark differs from story to story, from drowning, to surviving as unicorns, to transforming into narwhals.

A unicorn often is pictured as a white horse with a single horn, sometimes with cloven hooves. The three-toed unicorn in this illustration resembles a cross between a horned horse and a lion. This representation is from the thirteenth-century Harleian Bestiary. *(© British Library/HIP/Art Resource, NY)*

The Unicorn and the Narwhal

In the West, medieval sightings of narwhals added to the body of written work and oral tales about unicorns. The narwhal (*Monodon monoceros*) is an arctic whale that is conspicuous for the long, fluted, single tusk that protrudes from its upper lip.

For centuries, such "unicorn" horns were brought back to Europe by sailors and were regarded as great treasures. Queen Elizabeth I of England owned one of these so-called unicorn horns, which was said to be worth 10,000 pounds.

The Unicorn in the Middle Ages

Mentions of unicorns continued through the Middle Ages. Prester John, the fabled twelfth-century priest-king of a vast realm in Asia, supposedly possessed a number of tame unicorns. The medieval polymath Hildegarde of Bingen thought that unicorns could heal illness.

An early-thirteenth-century story holds that Genghis Khan encountered a unicorn as he prepared to take India and turned back,

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convinced that this was a sign from heaven not to attack. And in the late thirteenth century, Marco Polo reported seeing a large unicorn. This sighting, like so many others, was most likely of a rhinoceros.

The work known as the *Physiologus,* which was written by an unknown author in Alexandria during the second century C.E., not only described every beast in Christendom, but also provided allegories that linked them to their rightful place in creation. The *Physiologus* says this of the unicorn:

> He is a small animal, like a kid, but surprisingly fierce for his size, with one very sharp horn on his head, and no hunter is able to catch him by force. Yet there is a trick by which he is taken. Men lead a virgin to the place where he most resorts and leave her there alone. As soon as he sees this virgin, he runs and lays his head in her lap. She fondles him and he falls asleep. The hunters then approach and capture him and lead him to the palace of the king.

The Medieval church equated the unicorn with Christ, and its horn to the unity of Christ and the Father. That no hunter could capture him alone reminded readers that the will of the Messiah was not subject to earthly authority. The unicorn's small stature became a metaphor for Christ's humility, and its likeness to a kid was a reference to Christ's association with sinful men. The virgin in this description represented the Virgin Mary.

Probably the most familiar depiction of the Christian unicorn allegory is found in the sixteenth-century *Dame a la Licorne* (*Lady with a Unicorn*) tapestries, which are thought to have been designed in France and woven in Brussels. This series of textile artworks is now housed in the Cloisters, a branch of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

In the central tapestry, a lady is accompanied by a unicorn, set on a background of exquisitely woven flowers. The other tapestries in the series show the unicorn in the forest. It is accompanied by various animals that wait by a stream until the unicorn dips its horn into the water to purify it. The unicorn is subsequently snared by a pure maiden and places its head in her lap. The unicorn is then captured and killed by hunters. The tapestries depict the triumph of the unicorn's purity, as it is restored to life in the final scene, where it is shown with a collar and chain in a garden.

Unicorns in Heraldry

During the reign of Scotland's King Robert III, the Scottish royal arms were designed with two unicorns supporting the royal shield.

Upon the ascension of King James VI of Scotland to the throne of England, which effectively united Scotland and England, James retained the lion on the left of the new royal arms of England and added a unicorn on the right. Unicorns had long been held to be deadly enemies to lions, so this new configuration signified the reconciliation between the Scottish unicorn and the English lion.

The Unicorn in Astronomy

Western astronomers placed a unicorn in the heavens. The first historical reference to a constellation named for a unicorn is a seventeenth-century star chart. The chart was drawn by Jakob Bartsch, the son-in-law of the German astronomer Johannes Kepler. A constellation is marked *Unicornu,* which is Latin for the constellation Monoceros (One-Horn).

Unicorns in China

Unicorns have been loved and venerated in China for thousands of years. It was said that two unicorns lived during the reign of the Emperor Yao, fourth of the mythic five emperors who shaped the world 4,000 years ago. Indeed, along with the dragon, the phoenix, and the tortoise, the unicorn is supposed to have helped to create the world.

Other emperors also associated with unicorns were the Emperor Fu Hsi, to whom the unicorn gave the secret of written language, and the first emperor, Huang Di, who took his

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sighting of a unicorn as an indication that his reign would be long and peaceful.

Unicorn stories are associated with the sage Confucius, including several accounts of Confucius's mother. In one story, she is said to have met a unicorn while on her pilgrimage to ask for a child. The unicorn spoke to her, predicting the birth of a "king without a crown." In another story, while Confucius's mother was pregnant, she encountered a unicorn in the woods. It gave her a piece of jade, told her that her child-to-be would possess great wisdom, and placed its head in her lap. When Confucius was an old man, he is said to have seen a unicorn, which he believed meant that he would soon die.

The Chinese unicorn is said to have the body of a deer, the tail of an ox, and the hooves of a horse. Its horn is short and grows out of the middle of its forehead. This unicorn is called the *ki lin,* a combination of the *ki,* which is male, and the *lin,* which is female. The Chinese unicorn is a brightly colored creature. The hair on its back represents the five sacred Chinese colors—red, yellow, blue, white, and black—and it has a yellow belly. Some accounts claim that the Chinese unicorn has green scales like another magical and auspicious Chinese creature, the dragon.

Another Chinese unicorn is the *zhi,* a goat-like animal that points out the guilty and punishes them. Because the zhi was a mythic creature that served to ward off evil and evildoers, it was considered a guardian, second only to the dragon and the tiger in power. Logically enough, the zhi became associated with Chinese courts. In ancient China, unicorns were painted on the doors of courthouses and government buildings. This led to the use of the zhi as a symbol of the government's incorruptibility.

In Japan, the name for unicorn is *kirin,* an image preserved on the label of a popular exported beer. Like the ki lin, the kirin is associated with justice. It has been said to appear at courts to free the innocent and kill the guilty, by piercing them through the heart with its horn. The Japanese also have another unicorn-like creature, called the *sin-you*.

Stories of unicorns also appear in Mongolia, Tibet, and Arabia. The horn of the *karkadann* (probably an oryx) is supposed to be good luck against scorpions, and eating its meat is said to rid one of demons.

Unicorns in Popular Culture

Today, images of unicorns are almost as popular as those of teddy bears. They show up on T-shirts, as stuffed or sculptured ornaments, and on wall hangings.

There have been attempts to create flesh-and-blood unicorns. One such creature was recently exhibited at Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus, which was duly picketed by animal-rights activists. Unicorn fiction has become a veritable subgenre of fantasy, and sooner or later most writers of genre fantasy include a unicorn in one of their books.

Although unicorns are mentioned in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* (1872) and T.H. White's novel *The Once and Future King* (1958), probably the most beloved story of a unicorn in the past few decades is Peter S. Beagle's *The Last Unicorn* (1968). This tender, wry story tells of Schmendrick the Magician and his quest to free the unicorns from King Haggard.

In Patrick O'Brian's novel *The Hundred Days* (1998), the naturalist Dr. Stephen Maturin brings a narwhal's horn on board the HMS *Surprise* about the time that Napoleon returned from Elba and attempted to regain power. The horn, however, was broken, and the superstitious crew believed that their ship was afflicted by bad luck until the horn was repaired.

In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (1997), by J.K. Rowling, the wicked Voldemort drinks the silver blood of a unicorn to sustain his own life.

Perhaps the most astonishing thing about unicorns in western culture is that they have managed to survive as untameable figures of wonder and power. Unicorns continue to be symbols of strength and purity in a skeptical world.

Susan M. Shwartz and Josepha Sherman

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See also: Bestiary.

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Upelluri/Ubelluris

(Hittite)

The Hittite gods built the earth and heaven upon the powerful sleeping giant Upelluri. But he did not notice, even when heaven and Earth were separated with a copper knife.

Kumarbi's messenger, Imbaluri, commanded the Issira deities to place Ullikummi, the giant made of rock, on Upelluri's right shoulder. Ea, the sky god, questioned Upelluri in his search for Ullikummi. Upelluri admitted that there was a small pain in his shoulder, although he could not identify which god was causing it.

In his world-carrying aspect, Upelluri can be seen as related to, and possibly even the ancestor of, Atlas, who also carried the world on his shoulders.

Ira Spar

See also: Atlas; Giants.

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Urban Legends

Urban legends, also known as urban folklore, are fantastic stories that are believed (or at least claimed) to be true. They concern recent events that involved people and places that are fairly familiar to the teller and members of the audience.

In both their fantastic elements and the insistence that they are true, urban legends differ from myths and folktales. Myths are sacred stories believed by members of a particular culture. Folktales may take place in the actual world but are not taken to be true.

Urban legends are an important resource for storytellers because they express modern concerns in urban societies and are told and believed by individuals in all segments of those societies. These legends are not the exclusive domain of any single age, race, profession, or socioeconomic group.

Unlike traditional folklore, urban legends are formulated and transmitted not only by the general population but by the mass media as well. They may be transmitted orally or spread electronically via e-mail. They are the subject of numerous Web sites and online discussions and are retold visually in film, television, and comic book formats. Urban legends also have been the inspiration for short stories, poems, plays, and other literary works.

Feelings of unease about strange places, unfamiliar people, and bewildering situations and innovations are related through these legends. Urban legends often are cyclical, resurfacing to help articulate new fears about universal issues. There are legends about topics as diverse as animals, both strange and familiar, car culture, contaminated food, other threats to our children and our own personal safety, famous celebrities, and various horrifying incidents.

Elements

Urban legend narratives share many features with other traditional folk stories. They usually are anonymous, are primarily communicated face-to-face, and often exist in multiple versions, as they are adapted and re-created with each retelling and circulated among

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members of certain economic, familial, occupational, or cultural groups. But what sets urban legends apart from their more traditional counterparts are two elements: authentication of content and film-noir tone.

Authentication, which corroborates the truth of the story, is handled in three basic ways. The most frequent form of authentication is the use of the "friend-of-a-friend" (or FOAF) motif, "My grandmother's neighbor's cousin" and the like as the source of the tale. Because these sources are supposedly known to the teller, they are perceived as reliable.

A second method of authentication is the use of actual names, dates, and events to ground the stories in reality. This often works so well that urban legends are printed in newspapers as actual news items. These concrete details change over time and space, usually by tellers who refresh the relevance of the tales for each particular audience and situation.

The third common methodology is to attribute the story to the mass media. For example, "I heard it on *Oprah*" or "I read it in the newspaper."

The setting in an urban legend also must appear authentic. The lover's lane of "the boyfriend's death" may be generic, but the teller still must take the listener there to visualize the action. Details such as the moonlight or the make of the car are added for further validation.

Film noir refers to a film genre that provides steamy, dark, urban landscapes and ordinary characters facing unexpected twists and turns throughout the plot. Urban legends, for the most part, reflect this dark, steamy tone. They feature black comedy derived from the ill fortune of their characters and habitually depend on twisted endings and ambiguous characters and situations for effect.

Presentation

Even the grimmest tale of warning or the most sincere testimony of belief has to be told effectively if it is to impress its audience. Setting plays an important role in the communication process. If the legends are being told around campfires or at slumber parties, rather than in the course of regular conversation, they are being told for effect, and therefore will reflect that purpose. Stories told in such a setting will generally be much lengthier and usually will be polished for maximum effect.

Urban legends usually are conveyed in informal, face-to-face conversations, generally are brief, and often are constructed and told communally rather than by a single teller. Questions are encouraged, and comments from the listener during and at the end of the telling help to move the story along and develop its shape.

Because the legends serve diverse functions, their format is flexible and is influenced by the teller's purpose in relating the legend, the situation in which it is being told, and the people who are interacting in the telling. When transferred to the storyteller's repertoire, these stories become much more formalized, but some audience interjection—"That is not the way I heard/read/saw it"—is still anticipated.

The audience for urban legends generally is teenaged and older. The tales are generally too dark and frightening or simply too sophisticated for a younger audience, which may not have the necessary background to fully appreciate these cautionary tales.

Gail de Vos

See also: Hook, The; Ugly Baby; Vanishing Hitchhiker.

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Utu/Shamash

(Sumerian)

In the ancient Middle East, the god Utu, known as Shamash in Akkadian, was a Sumerian sun deity. As the personification of

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the sun, whose light illuminates darkness, the god Utu sought justice for both gods and mankind.

In Sumerian myths, Utu was the son of Nanna, the moon god. He was also the twin brother of Inanna, the goddess of heaven. In later Akkadian traditions, he was the son either of the sky god, An, or of Enlil, a god of creation.

Utu's consort was Sherida (Akkadian, Aya), the goddess of light. In narrative tales of the land of Aratta, the hero Lugalbanda was called the son of Utu.

Utu is depicted in examples dating from the twenty-fourth century B.C.E. as a bearded deity with rays emanating from his shoulders. He usually is shown with his emblem, a serrated saw, which probably referred to his role as the guardian of justice. A Babylonian hymn indicates that the saw was used to punish criminals. Some images show Utu emerging from the eastern mountains in the morning, as two deified attendants open the gates of heaven.

Utu was also believed to have an attachment to humans. Meshkiagasher, a legendary king of the city of Uruk, was said to have been an offspring of the god. Utu is also a character in the Sumerian poem "Dumuzi's Dream," which describes how Dumuzi, husband of Inanna and brother-in-law of Utu, prayed to Utu for help.

In the Sumerian tale of the enmity between Enmerkar and Ensuhgirana, the lord of Aratta, Utu responded to the cries of the cowherd and shepherd whose animals had been bewitched by a sorcerer.

In the Babylon legend of Etana, Utu, here called Shamash, helped a trapped eagle to escape from a pit. The legendary King Etana had no heir and prayed to Shamash to grant him one. In a dream, Etana heard the voice of the god of justice, who told him to go to the aid of the eagle. In return for his assistance, the bird would help him find the mythical plant of fertility. Etana freed the eagle, which carried him to heaven in search of the "Plant of Giving Birth."

In the *Epic of Gilgamesh,* Shamash (again, the name used for Utu), upon the request of the goddess Ninsun, the mother of Gilgamesh, protected and assisted the hero in his battle with the Humbaba monster. In a later episode, after Gilgamesh and Enkidu subdued and killed the Bull of Heaven, the two heroes ripped out its heart, prostrated themselves before the god Shamash, and presented the heart to him.

Ira Spar

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Vainamoinen

(Finnish)

Vainamoinen was the wise wizard and adventurer of the Finnish epic the *Kalevala*.

Vainamoinen was the son of the heavenly maiden, the demigoddess Ilmatar. Trapped in her womb for more than 700 years, he grew to adulthood and then finally escaped into the world as an active, white-bearded old man.

In the land that would become Finland, Vainamoinen brought the world such gifts as agriculture and fire. He also invented the *kantele,* a type of harp or lyre, from the bones of a giant pike.

Among Vainamoinen's adventures was an encounter with the young, brash Joukahainen, who challenged him to a duel of magic. Vainamoinen literally sang the younger man into the ground, and Joukahainen escaped only because he promised Vainamoinen that Joukahainen's sister, Aino, would marry him. Vainamoinen agreed, but Aino threw herself into the sea to avoid marrying the old man.

Joukahainen sought revenge, shooting Vainamoinen's horse and sending the wizard tumbling into the sea. Vainamoinen was rescued by a large eagle and was carried to the land of Pohjola. The mistress of Pohjola, Louhi, tended to Vainamoinen until he recovered. She then refused to let him go until he promised that Ilmarinen, the master smith, would forge a magical artifact, called a *sampo,* for Pohjola.

On his way home, Vainamoinen met Louhi's daughter, the Maiden of Pohjola, and asked her to marry him. She agreed on the condition that Vainamoinen would carry out certain seemingly impossible tasks. While Vainamoinen carved a wooden boat, however, his axe slipped, wounding his knee so he was unable to complete the tasks. He searched for an expert blood stauncher and found an old man who stopped the flow of blood by using magic incantations.

The Maiden of Pohjola chose to marry Ilmarinen, the forger of the sampo, as he performed the three tasks she set before him: He plowed a field full of vipers, hunted down the bear of Tuonela and the wolf of Manala, and fished the Great Pike out of the Tuonela River. Vainamoinen held no ill will toward the couple and entertained the wedding guests with his singing.

Now, Vainamoinen and other heroes set out to steal back the sampo from Pohjola. Vainamoinen put the people of Pohjola to sleep with his kantele playing, and the sampo was taken away. Louhi set off in pursuit in the form of a giant bird of prey. In the ensuing battle, the sampo was smashed and fell into the sea. There, it continued to grind and turned the sea to salt water.

Louhi sent diseases to destroy the people of Kalevala, but Vainamoinen cured the sick.

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Louhi sent a bear to attack the Kalevala cattle, but Vainamoinen slew the bear. The mistress of Pohjola, Louhi, hid the Sun and the Moon inside a hill and stole the fire as well. Vainamoinen and Ilmarinen freed the fire and forged keys needed to release the Sun and Moon.

In his final adventure, Vainamoinen set sail in a copper boat. He planned to return when he was needed.

J.R.R. Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955), was familiar with the *Kalevala*. Tolkein's wizard adventurer, Gandalf, was almost certainly inspired by the wise wizard Vainamoinen.

See also: *Kalevala;* Wizards; *Retelling: Vainamoinen.*

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Valhalla

(Norse)

Valhalla was the great hall, or palace, that stood in the Grove of Glesir in Asgard, the realm of the Norse gods. It was presided over by the head god of the Norse pantheon, Odin. The name *Valhalla* means hall of the slain.

Valhalla was said to be truly enormous, with 540 doors. Each door was large enough for 800 warriors to pass through at once. The walls were made of spears, the benches of breastplates, and the roof of shining shields. The hall held countless warriors, all of whom were former mortals. A wolf guarded Valhalla's main door, and an eagle flew watch over it.

Valhalla was home to the Norse heroes called the *einherjar,* who had died bravely and honorably in battle. Those who came to Valhalla were chosen for this honor by the Valkyries, the nine warrior daughters of Odin. Each day, these warriors rode out to take part in military games and mock battles. Every night, they returned to the hall to feast. Any wounds sustained during the day healed instantly, and the fine roasted boar and intoxicating mead never ran out. The warriors waited in Valhalla for the final battle, called Ragnarok, at which time they would march forth into a doomed but glorious fight against the giants, the enemies of the gods.

Valhalla was the ideal afterlife for Norse Viking warriors. They could think of no worse fate for themselves than losing their fighting abilities through crippling injuries or old age and gradually becoming useless in a warrior society. It was far better for true warriors to die in glorious combat at the peak of their powers, assured of a true and honorable warrior's afterlife in Valhalla.

There was also a place at Valhalla for women in the hall of Frigga, Odin's wife. Women who died in childbirth were welcomed as warriors. Couples who died when they were fervently in love with each other also were permitted to enter.

Warriors who did not get to Valhalla, whether through cowardice, dying in bed, or some other shameful end, went to the dark home of the dead. This was ruled over by the grim goddess Hel in a realm deep within the underworld. The Vikings considered such an end to be literally a fate worse than mere death.

See also: Norse Mythology; Odin/Odhinn; Valkyries.

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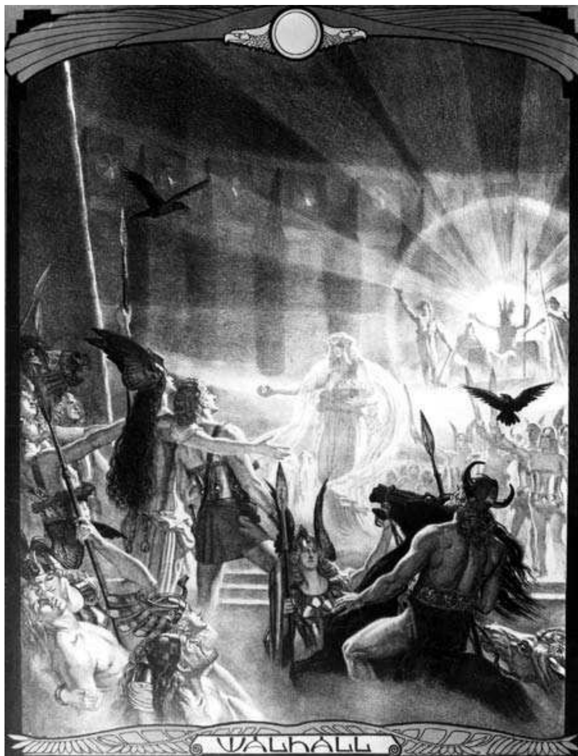
Valkyries

(Norse)

The Valkyries were the daughters of Odin, chief god of the Norse pantheon. They escorted the spirits of the bravest slain warriors, the *einherjar,* to Valhalla, Odin's great hall. The name *Valkyrie* means choosers of the slain.

The einherjar were taken to Valhalla to prepare for the final battle, called Ragnarok. This battle would mark the end of the gods and change the fate of everything.

The Valkyries' names were Brynhild, Göll, Göndul, Gudr, Gunn, Herfjoturr, Hildr, Hladgunnr, Hlokk, Hrist, Sigrdrifa, Sigrún, and Svafa. They were portrayed as beautiful young women armed with helmets and spears, and they rode winged horses.



"The Ride of the Valkyries," an oil painting by British artist William T. Maud (1865–1903), shows the Valkyries, accompanied by one of Odin's two ravens, riding out to find those who had died honorably in battle. The chosen men will be carried to Valhalla, Odin's great hall. *(Snark/Art Resource, NY)*

The Valkyries also often acted as Odin's messengers. According to the myth, when they rode forth on their errands, their bright, glinting armor caused the strange lights of the aurora borealis.

Some scholars have speculated that originally the Valkyries were priestesses. These were not beautiful young maidens in armor but old women who selected victims for human sacrifice. But the image of beautiful women taking the brave warriors up to Valhalla replaced this less pleasant image.

The nineteenth-century German composer Richard Wagner included the Valkyries in his operatic work *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (*The Ring of the Nibelung*; 1869–1876), commonly known as "The Ring Cycle," which is based on Norse mythology. One of the most familiar melodies from that work is the orchestral overture, commonly known as "Ride of the Valkyries."

See also: Brunhilde/Brynhild/Brunnehilde; Norse Mythology; Odin/Odhinn.

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Vampires

Vampires are undead beings who feed off the blood and life of the living. They have existed in the folklore of many cultures for thousands of years.

The fear that the dead can return to spread disease or sap the vitality of the living has caused many superstitions and beliefs to spring up concerning how vampires are made, detected, and destroyed. Legends of vampires are most common in Eastern Europe but also occur in China.

Although the vampire in recent fiction is often depicted as lanky, tall, and pale, the most

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common of the folkloric vampire are bloated and ruddy. In Greece, vampires sometimes are thought to have dark blue or black faces. This may be due to the practice of burying people who were suspected of being vampires face-down. The blood in the corpse would pool in the face rather than the back; if the corpse was exhumed at a later date to determine if it had become a vampire, the face would be dark rather than pale.

The word *vampire* first appeared in English in 1679, but there is no agreement as to the ultimate origin of the word. One theory is that the word comes from the Slavic *upior,* or *upyr,* which are in turn derived from the Turkish *uber.* Others think it may come from the Greek *pi,* Serbo-Croatian *pirati,* or Lithuanian *wempti.* The theory that is most widely accepted is that the word derives from the Serbian *bamiiup,* which essentially means "vampire."

In Hungary and Romania, where legends of vampires are very common, the word was introduced fairly recently. In Hungary, the earliest evidence of the word occurred in 1786. In Romania, the word first appeared around 1815, but the more common terms are *strigoi* and *moroi.* While the term *vampire* has become widely accepted in Hungary, the older, more common terms still are preferred in Romania. In Transylvania, home of the historical Count Dracula, the term is *şişcoi.*

Vampires in Folklore

The modern concept of vampires is that they are created when a person is bitten by another vampire, but folkloric vampires were created in a number of different ways. The following individuals might become vampires:

A person born with a caul, a membrane that covers the head.

A person born with teeth.

Someone who lived an immoral life or was an alcoholic.

Someone who committed suicide.

A murder victim whose murder was not avenged.

Someone who died while under a curse.

Someone who died while excommunicated from their religion.

A convert to Islam.

A priest who celebrated Mass while living with an unconfessed mortal sin.

A person born or conceived on a Church holy day.

Someone whose godparents stumbled while reciting the Apostle's Creed at his or her baptism.

A person also might be doomed to become a vampire after death if a cat or dog jumped across the corpse or if the shadow of a man fell on it. Consequently, the danger of becoming a vampire was very real and of great concern to people living with these beliefs, so precautions were often taken with every corpse to attempt to protect the dead.

Protecting the Dead

Since piercing a vampire with a sharp object was one way to destroy it, placing a sharp implement, often a sickle, in the coffin with the recently dead was a custom designed to keep the dead from rising at all. In some areas, the sickle was placed on the abdomen of the deceased; in others, the sickle was placed across the neck so that if the vampire tried to rise from the grave it would cut off its own head. In Morocco, knives were placed on the body for the same purpose.

Binding the deceased's limbs was another way to keep the dead from rising, though local variations determined whether the dead could be bound inside the coffin. Sometimes, the dead had their ankles or knees bound for a time, but the knots were removed prior to burial so that they would not bind the soul to the body.

People in other districts left the knots in the coffin, as the vampire would be forced to untie them before it could escape. In some practices, nets were placed in the coffin in the belief that the vampire would be forced to

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undo each knot in the net at the rate of one per year. Poppy seeds could also be spread on the ground, as the vampire would be obsessed with finding every single one before it could move beyond its grave.

In Greek folklore, binding the corpse was thought to keep a vampire from returning from the dead. This may be why, in Greek mythology, the infant Oedipus had his ankles tied together when he was abandoned as an infant by his parents. This practice was not to keep the newborn from crawling away, but to keep the infant from returning from the dead.

Protecting oneself and one's family from wandering vampires was a constant concern. As it was believed a vampire could only return to its home the same way it had left, corpses were sometimes removed from homes feet first, via a window.

Turning the items in one's home upside down would prevent a vampire from asking these items to open the door. People slept with their feet at the head of the bed to keep a vampire from finding them if one did enter the home.

Destroying a Vampire

Once someone was suspected of vampirism, his or her corpse was exhumed and examined. If the corpse was bloated and had bloody lips, it was presumed to be a vampire. The vampire could be dispatched by piercing its abdomen with a stake of ash or hawthorn, or a sickle, or another sharp object such as a needle, depending on the particular beliefs of the village. Sometimes, a hide was placed on the vampire before staking it to control blood splatter, as being touched by the vampire's blood could drive someone mad or even turn that person into a vampire.

In some traditions, staking was sufficient to destroy a vampire. In others, the corpse had to be beheaded and cremated. The heart had to be burned entirely to ash or the vampire might return. Sometimes, corpses simply were buried deeper than usual, buried face-down, thrown into swiftly flowing water, or buried at a crossroads.

During plagues, stories of vampires were extremely common. Since the manner in which the disease was transmitted was unknown, it was not unusual to blame outbreaks on vampire activity. When a plague killed great numbers of people, many remained unburied or were buried improperly. The misunderstood processes of decomposition were readily observable. Those who were improperly buried often were dug up by wolves or dogs, or simply "rose" out of the ground due to the bloating of the body and the shallowness of the grave. This may be where beliefs that wolves and dogs were the enemies of vampires originated, as well as the belief that the earth might reject the unholy corpse.

Eastern Europe

Serbian vampires were active and out of their graves every day but Saturday. Romanian vampires were active at all times, but most particularly on Saint Andrew's Eve and Saint George's Eve. In Romania, a vampire that remained undestroyed for seven years could pass into another country, become a man again, marry, and have children. But he and his children would become vampires upon death and ravage the wife's family and her village.

Since it was widely believed in many parts of Eastern Europe that nearly anyone could become a vampire, identifying those who had become vampires was extremely important. If a village had some bad luck, such as terrible weather, a plague, or a string of unusual deaths, it could be blamed on a vampire.

The villagers looked for a vampire by checking recent graves. They would check to see if there were holes by which the vampire might have escaped. Or they might lead a white (or, in some cases, a black) horse over fresh graves. The horse would refuse to walk over the grave of a vampire. Many traditions held that it would take either nine days or forty days for a vampire to rise, so anyone

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who had not yet been dead for the specified time would not be suspect.

In Russia, a woman who made a pact with the devil was believed to rise from her grave as an *eretica*. These undead creatures would be most active in spring and autumn, when they would spread death and disease via the evil eye.

In Poland, a child born with teeth or a caul was destined to become a kind of vampire called an *ohyn*. The ohyn did not leave its grave, but it did chew on its own flesh and thereby magically brought death to its family.

The *liougat* of Albania rose from its grave armed with huge fingernails. It killed and devoured anything it found. The liougat could be thwarted by wolves, which tore off its legs. The maimed vampire then had to return to its grave, defeated, and remain there forever.

Germany

In Germany, the *Neuntöter,* which means "ninekiller," would rise nine days after burial to spread plague. But a lemon placed in its mouth would keep it in its grave.

The *nachzehrer* of northern Germany chewed on its burial shroud and its extremities, so its appearance was often quite tattered. In fact, it was supposed to make so much noise while chewing on itself and its shroud that it could be located in its grave by sound alone.

A person could become a nachzehrer if his or her name was not removed from his or her clothing before burial. If the nachzehrer rang the church bells, whoever heard them was doomed to die soon thereafter. A nachzehrer could be destroyed through decapitation, as long as the head and body were reburied separately.

China

The Chinese *xiang shi* was often greenish in color and sometimes glowed. The xiang shi was animated by the *po,* or inferior soul of a person, and was created by a sudden or violent death or an improper burial.

Modern Vampires

A new kind of vampire was created in the nineteenth century by authors such as J. Sheridan Le Fanu and Bram Stoker. Le Fanu's *Carmilla: A Vampyre Tale* (1872) and Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) combined the horror of the revenant with eroticism and spawned an industry that equated the vampire with seduction. Though Bram Stoker named his vampire after a historical fifteenth-century Wallachian prince, the name of Dracula is not associated with vampires in Romania.

Since the publication of Stoker's *Dracula,* vampires have developed into something completely separate from their folkloric antecedents. Modern fictional vampires cannot see themselves in a mirror, are afraid of crosses, and are friends with wolves. They create other vampires by drinking victims' blood, then forcing the victims to drink their blood. The stake driven through the vampire must be through the heart rather than the abdomen. And the vampire cannot enter a private residence without an invitation.

These vampires often rise from the grave after three days, rather than the more traditional nine or forty days. They possess a hypnotic gaze, and their overall appearance and demeanor can be quite sensual. They bear no resemblance to a bloated corpse. They can turn into mist or shape-shift into a bat. Often, vampires cannot cross running water, and their coffins must contain a quantity of their home earth. The modern vampire is difficult to find and harder to kill.

More than a century since Bram Stoker brought the sensual vampire to life, the character of the vampire has been molded into many different forms in film. He has been a thing of horror (*Nosferatu,* 1922; *Dracula,* 1931), the subject of jokes (*Love at First Bite,* 1979), a misunderstood antihero (*Dracula,* 1979; *Bram Stoker's Dracula,* 1992), a mentor (*My Best Friend Is a Vampire,* 1988), and even a disaffected teenager (*The Lost Boys,* 1987). In China, the xiang shi has been transformed into the hopping vampire of Hong Kong kung fu films.

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Writers such as Anne Rice, P.N. Elrod, Fred Saberhagen, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, Barbara Hambly, and Laurell K. Hamilton each have their own take on the modern vampire. The concept of the vampire has proved malleable enough to be re-created again and again.

Marella Sands

See also: Bats; Liderc; Shape-Shifters.

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Vanishing Hitchhiker

The tale of the vanishing hitchhiker may be the most widespread and popular folktale of all. It has been collected by folklorists in, among other countries, the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Malaysia, China, and the Philippines.

The vanishing hitchhiker is the ghost of a victim, usually female, of an automobile accident. The ghost is trying to get home and is picked up by a Good Samaritan. When the Good Samaritan arrives at the ghost's house, the ghost vanishes. The bewildered Good Samaritan then learns from the still-grieving family that yes, this was a ghost that had been trying to get home for days, weeks, or years. Some variants add the detail of the ghost being cold, and the Good Samaritan lending her a sweater. When the ghost vanishes, the sweater is left behind, or, in a neat twist, is found draped over her tombstone.

One of the earlier recorded versions of the story is in the New Testament. An Ethiopian driving a chariot picked up the Apostle Philip, who baptized him, and then disappeared.

Other versions of the basic story include a tale from Hawaii. An old woman was given a lift by a Good Samaritan. She asked to be driven near Mount Kilauea and then disappeared, leaving the Good Samaritan to realize he had just given a ride to the volcano goddess, Madame Pele.

Another version, from Appalachia, involves a vanishing hitchhiker who turned out to be John the Baptist. He told the Good Samaritan that Jesus Christ would return and then disappeared.

The vanishing hitchhiker also turns up in movies, such as Orson Welles's *Return to Glennascaul* (1951), in which both a mother and daughter are hitchhiking ghosts who vanish after they are taken by a Good Samaritan back to their home.

See also: Urban Legends.

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Vegetable Sheep/Lamb

(European)

Plant-animal hybrids, vegetable sheep and vegetable lambs, were believed to produce cotton as sheep produce wool and are depicted in the bestiaries, the medieval collections of fact and folklore about real and imaginary animals. Also known as the lambs of Tartary, these creatures were believed to live in the Asian land of Tartary, which is part of present-day Eastern Europe and Russia.

The origins of this odd belief are almost certainly connected to the arrival of cotton bolls from the East into Western Europe. Since no one in Western Europe had ever seen cotton in its unspun, natural form, they assumed that the bolls were a form of wool. So, the reasoning went, these strange little fleeces probably came from a miniature plant-animal that produced tiny sheep-fruit that ate the grass under the main plant until the bolls ripened and dropped off.

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Further "proof" was found in the root—or rhizome, to be accurate—of the fern species *Cibotium barometz,* which does vaguely resemble a lamb, complete with a body and four legs, especially when all extraneous material is pared away. Seen together with a cotton boll by someone who had never before seen either one, the leap could be made to the belief that these items were the body and fleece of a vegetable lamb.

Surprisingly enough, belief in the vegetable lamb lasted well past the Middle Ages. Sir Hans Sloan, member and secretary of Britain's preeminent organization of scientists, the Royal Society of England, and the founder of the English Natural History Museum, had in his possession a "vegetable lamb of Tartary." But Sloan lived in an age of scientific investigation—Sir Isaac Newton was president of the Royal Society at the time—and so the "lamb" was studied. It turned out to be a carefully pared example of the *Cibotium barometz* rhizome.

See also: Bestiary.

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Verse Stories

Verse stories are short dramatic tales for children that are told in verse. These stories are related to nursery rhymes and have an equally long history. Verse stories often are longer than other types of rhymes, have simple plots and melodies, and usually lack magical or tragic elements.

One example of a very popular verse story, the anonymous "The Queen of Hearts," dates back several centuries. It was used by Lewis Carroll (the pseudonym of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson) in his famous fantasy, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865).

The Queen of Hearts,
She made some tarts,
All on a summer's day;
The Knave of Hearts,
He stole those tarts,
And took them clean away.
The King of Hearts
Called for the tarts,
And beat the knave full sore;
The Knave of Hearts
Brought back the tarts,
And vowed he'd steal no more.

As this example shows, a verse story can be relatively short, but verse stories also may be long and quite complicated. Storytellers may adjust the length, depending on what will suit the audience.

See also: Ballads.

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Vietnamese Storytelling

Vietnam is made up of more than fifty ethnic groups, each one with its own oral traditions.

Folktales and storytelling are both still popular throughout Vietnam. But storytelling generally takes place on a smaller scale in the cities than it does in the more isolated mountain areas because large gatherings are still discouraged by the government. However, the Vietnamese government has worked with the Association of Vietnamese Folklorists to conserve as much as possible of the country's oral tradition. Many stories have been collected and are compiled in

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massive volumes of Vietnamese tales and legends.

In addition to standard storytelling, each ethnic group has its own type of epic songs about mythical or legendary heroes. One type of epic singing performance is called the *h'mon.*

The h'mon generally takes place at night, with the audience sitting outside, listening in the darkness. The epic is recited in a mixture of spoken word and song and can take anywhere from three to twenty nights to complete. In addition to local epics, the Indian *Ramayana* is also known and performed in Vietnam.

The thousand-year-old tradition of *ca dao* is still popular in rural Vietnam. These songs and ballads, which are sung without any instrumental accompaniment, are a form of Vietnamese folk poetry that covers a wide range of subjects, from romance to children's themes.

A unique form of Vietnamese storytelling theater is *mua roi nuoc,* or water-puppet theater. Performances of mua roi nuoc take place at the edge of a river or pond, with the audience sitting along the shore facing a large screen that stands up out of the water. The water's surface forms the stage floor. Puppeteers stand in the water behind the screen and manipulate colorfully painted wooden puppets using rods held underwater.

The mua roi nuoc puppet characters represent everything from humans and animals to fairies and dragons, and there may be as many as fifteen different puppet characters in use at the same time. As the puppeteers perform, an accompanying ensemble plays background music.

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Vodianoi

(Slavic)

In Slavic myth and folklore, the *vodianoi* is the unpredictable, dangerous king or spirit of water, particularly of freshwater.

As a water spirit, the vodianoi needed no clothes. He generally was seen by humans as a being that was half fish and half human, or as an old man covered in scales and mud. His hair and beard were green, and his hands were webbed. When he chose to have a tail, he looked something like a heavyset merman. When he decided to take a two-legged shape, his long toes helped him to propel himself underwater.

The vodianoi was not actively evil, but he lacked all concept of human morality. He sometimes willfully drowned humans out of sheer dislike, but more often he dragged them underwater to provide entertainment for himself and his wife, the *vodianikha.* Those humans who were foolish enough to bathe at twilight were at greatest risk of being snatched.

When he became truly angry with humanity, the vodianoi was said to cause floods that destroyed dams and mills. Wise millers and fishermen made him offerings to keep him docile. The vodianoi was considered to be wealthy due both to these offerings and to the bounty he had taken from sunken ships.

In the Christian era, the vodianoi was often confused with the Christian devil, as both were believed to live underwater and to look alike, except, of course, that the devil had horns.

See also: Slavic Mythology.

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Vol'ka

(Slavic)

Prince Vol'ka is portrayed in Slavic epic folk poems, called *bylini,* as a heroic warrior. He protects the residents of his isolated, forest-bound principality by performing such traditional deeds of heroism as defeating an enemy in single combat. He is also the only hero of a *bylina* who is a magician and shape-shifter.

Vol'ka's fictional world is based on regions of Russia and Ukraine in the twelfth century. These regions were divided into principalities, the most important of which was ruled by Prince Vladimir of Kiev. Much of the land was heavily forested, and traveling between the principalities, or even between villages, was difficult. A local prince in the twelfth century could technically be a vassal of Vladimir yet, because of the forests and lack of decent roads, might never see him.

This is the setting for the Kievan cycle of tales. It is a domain of myth and folktale in which historical figures, like Prince Vladimir, mingle with folkloric creatures, such as dragons and magic-wielding princes.

Russian folklorists have collected Prince Vol'ka's bylina in manuscript form at least seventeen times in the last 200 years. The epic is usually included in the Kievan cycle. However, it is not known whether Vol'ka was one of the knights, called *bogatyri*. Vol'ka is not a member of Prince Vladimir's court. His character is unique in that generally the bogatyri were featured in each other's bylini, but Vol'ka is mentioned in only one bylina besides his own. In this other bylina, he appears not as a bogatyr but as a secondary character. It is possible that the bylina of Prince Vol'ka does not actually belong to the Kievan cycle.

Some scholars have tried to find a link between Prince Vol'ka and various historical characters, such as the tenth-century Prince Vseslav of Polovsk. But the only evidence to support the claim that Vol'ka is based on Vseslav is the fact that Prince Vseslav was born with a caul, which is a traditional sign of someone born to be a sorcerer.

Vol'ka's Birth and Childhood

Vol'ka's family background differs from that of the other bylini protagonists. While the other bylini heroes are born into noble or common human families, Vol'ka does not have a human father. One story variant does not mention a father at all. In the more common version, Vol'ka's mother, Princess Marfa, was strolling in the garden when a snake suddenly coiled around her leg and slapped her thigh with its tail. Soon after this incident, she discovered she was pregnant.

As one might expect after that strange engendering, the baby Vol'ka was hardly ordinary. His birth was announced by an earthquake and a storm. Birds, fish, and wild beasts flew, swam, and ran wildly in all directions.

Vol'ka quickly displayed the common traits of a culture hero: miraculous growth and the supernaturally rapid gaining of wisdom. Able to speak at birth, the one-day-old baby looked as large and well developed as a child of one year. He told his mother "in a voice like thunder" to put away childish toys and instead prepare a warrior's proper gear and arms for him. In a request that separates Vol'ka from most culture heroes, he also asked for books of wisdom.

Vol'ka became as sage as any man by the time that he was five. The bylina makes a clear distinction between true wisdom and sly wisdom. The latter includes tricks such as the art of shape shifting. Vol'ka swiftly learns and masters both types.

In traditional Christian Slavic folklore, the *kolduni* are sorcerers of human and demonic ancestry who are feared for their dark powers. But Vol'ka is never characterized in any of the folklore as a *koldun,* and his powers are never portrayed as dark. Vol'ka more closely resembles the heroes found in world folktales and myths that are born of two worlds, the human and the animal.

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Vol'ka and the Animal World

The hero's ties to the animal world indicate that his tale predates Christianity's arrival in Slavic lands. Christianity and its antimagic bias reached the area in the twelfth century. Vol'ka's name may derive from *volkhv,* an ancient Slavic word for "sorcerer." However, some linguists think that the name may have ties with the ancient Slavic word for wolf, *volk.* The latter seems fitting, given Vol'ka's shape-shifting abilities. Apparently without needing any special rituals or preparation, he can become a falcon, fish, wolf, or bull.

Vol'ka's subjects calmly accepted their prince's magic. At one point, Vol'ka, in the form of a hunted animal, teased his hunters, asking who among them was able to shape-shift to hunt. They answered matter-of-factly that no one could do this but their prince.

Vol'ka the Warrior

Vol'ka is also a great warrior. In the only complete tale about this character, word reached the prince that the tsar of India (or in some versions Turkey or Central Asia) was planning an attack. Vol'ka instantly mustered his *druzhina,* or war band, and led them to battle. The druzhina was, as befitted a folk hero, far larger than any in the real world. Rather than the standard thirty men, Vol'ka's band consisted of 7,000. When so large an army was unable to find enough food during their march, their magician-prince changed roles from warrior to hunter. He shape-shifted into a wolf and then a falcon to capture game for his men.

The prince's shape-shifting ability also allowed him to gather information from behind enemy lines. As an aurochs, a type of bison, he leapt toward India with magical swiftness. Then, as a falcon, the princely spy perched on the tsar's window sill. While within enemy walls, the tireless Vol'ka turned himself into an ermine and destroyed as many of the royal armaments as he could by chewing through bowstrings, separating arrowheads from shafts, and, in one anachronistic variant, destroying flintlock muskets.

When Vol'ka's army arrived at the royal fortress, however, his men despaired. The walls were too tall and solid for any army to scale or pierce. The men said only an ant could get under them. So Vol'ka turned himself and the entire army into ants. They tunneled under the walls, were turned back into men, and proceeded with the attack.

At this point, Vol'ka proved he was an honorable twelfth-century hero. Rather than blasting the enemy with magic, he fought the foe in hand-to-hand combat. Vol'ka hurled the tsar down with great force and killed him. The Indian threat ended, and Vol'ka and his men were married to the lovely Indian maidens.

And so ends this tale, a curious combination of medieval folk epic and ancient folkloric elements with the unique hero-warrior Vol'ka at its center.

See also: Bylina/Bylini; Kievan Cycle; Slavic Mythology.

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Völva

(Norse)

In Norse and Teutonic mythology a *völva* was a female prophet, a type of priest or shaman. Generally, this figure was an older woman who was not bound to a single family or clan and could wander freely.

The völva might travel alone or have a retinue of apprentices. She performed a craft called *seidr,* which was either shamanistic ritual or true sorcery. Völvas were held in high regard. Men could be völvas as well but were not revered as the women were. True seidr was considered a woman's craft.

A völva is described in the *Saga of Erik,* dressed in a blue-black gem-studded cloak, a necklace of glass beads, and a hat trimmed

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with white catskin. A pouch containing her magical tools hung from a belt around her waist. She wore calfskin shoes ornamented with brass and catskin gloves, with the white fur on the inside. She carried a distaff decorated with brass and gems, which was said to create a spell of forgetfulness on anyone she tapped with it three times on the cheek.

The völva would sit on a small platform and make her predictions after slipping into a trance. In the *Saga of Hrolf Kraki,* the völva located two missing boys this way, chanting out the information.

It was said that the völva was so important a figure that even Odin, one of the chief Norse deities, consulted a völva about the future of the gods.

See also: Norse Mythology.

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Wayang

(Indonesian)

Wayang is an ancient Javanese word meaning "shadow" or "ghost." It is also the name for the traditional sacred dramas of Java and Bali. There are seven main forms of wayang, but *wayang kulit,* or shadow-puppet theater, is the most common. In Java, shadow plays are performed to celebrate public holidays, religious festivals, weddings, birth celebrations, and circumcisions. In Bali, they are staged at all these events, as well as at cremations.

Wayang Kulit

The wayang kulit may have originated in Java thousands of years ago. Wayang kulit stories are told with flat puppets made of leather and cut out in profile. These shadow puppets are beautifully painted and intricately pierced so that their shadows are amazingly detailed. The puppets' arms are moved by manipulating small sticks.

The puppeteer is called the *dalang.* He sits cross-legged behind the screen, which is usually a large white cloth stretched on a wooden frame. An oil lamp hangs above the puppeteer so that as he moves the puppets the lamp casts their shadows onto the screen.

Shadow plays generally are extensive events. In its entirety, a typical wayang kulit may last from sundown until sunrise, about eight or nine hours. Not only must the dalang be a trained performer, but he has to be strong and in excellent health as well. During the full nine hours, he must remain cross-legged, moving only to control the puppets and the *kechrek,* or rattle, which he constantly strikes with his right foot.

The dalang speaks for all the puppets and has to be able to change his voice to portray every type of character. A shadow play is always accompanied by a *gamelan,* a traditional Indonesian orchestra, which is made up mostly of metal percussion instruments. The dalang also acts as conductor, giving hidden cues to the gamelan musicians.

Two Forms of Wayang Kulit

There are two subcategories of wayang kulit. The older form is *wayang purwa,* in which stories from the two great Indian epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana,* are told. Both of these epics arrived in Java with the influx of Indian influence in the first century C.E. There are about 200 different *lakon,* or stories, based on what are now truly Javanese versions of the tales within those two epics. In Java, the Pendawa cycle was inspired by the *Mahabharata,* and the Rama cycle by the *Ramayana.* Perhaps the most popular stories in the Rama cycle are

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This Indonesian cotton fabric, dyed in a technique known as batik, is decorated with a design that depicts wayang puppets. *(© Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY)*

those concerning the marriage of Rama to Sinta (Sita in the *Ramayana*) and Sinta's abduction and rescue.

The second form of wayang kulit is called *wayang gedog*. In this type, stories from the later Hindu era of Java are retold. They feature tales of a mythological hero-prince, Panji. Wayang gedog is rarely performed today.

Puppet shows on nonmythic themes are less common. Those that are performed include *wayang golek,* which uses round puppets carved of wood, and *wayang wong,* dance dramas performed by live actors.

***See also*:** Puppetry and Storytelling.

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Wele

(Kenyan)

Wele is the supreme god of the Kavirondo people of Kenya.

It was Wele who created everything. First, he created the heavens, then the Sun, the Moon, the other celestial bodies, and finally Earth and humanity.

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Wele can appear to people in two ways. He can appear as Omuwanga, the benign white god, or as Gumali, the black god who brings misfortune.

See also: An/Anu; Odin/Odhinn; Sius; Zeus.

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Wenamun, Report of

(Egyptian)

The *Report of Wenamun* literary text recounts events that took place during the reign of Pharaoh Ramses XI, who ruled from about 1104 until 1075 B.C.E. It is not known if this work was derived from a genuine report or is entirely a work of fiction.

Written during the twenty-first dynasty (c. 1081–931 B.C.E.), the tale reflects the political reality of this period, during which Egypt was divided. The northern region was ruled by a king who resided in the city of Tanis. A high priest of Amun ruled the southern region from Thebes. As a result, the government was largely ineffective. This impotence is presented frankly in Wenamun's story.

Wenamun Sails for Byblos

The author of the report calls himself Wenamun, Elder of the Portal of the Temple of Amun. He relates leaving Thebes to fetch the timber needed to build the sacred barque, or boat, of Amun, the supreme god of ancient Egypt.

After paying a call on King Smendes and his wife, Tantemon, in Tanis, Wenamun departed for Byblos (in Syria) on a Syrian ship. Within a month, he arrived at the harbor of Dor, Israel (present-day Tell Dor), where a crewman ran off with his gold and silver.

Wenamun lodged a complaint with the ruler of Dor, who had jurisdiction over incidents at the port. Wenamun reminded the unnamed ruler that the valuables that were stolen belonged to the rulers of Egypt, the ruler of Byblos, and Amun-Re. After nine days, the chief of Dor was unable to find the thief and could only offer Wenamun this advice: He should avoid Tyre on his way to Byblos.

Wenamun sailed safely to Byblos. Before disembarking to meet with Zekerbaal, prince of Byblos, he searched the ship and confiscated thirty *deben* of silver, almost equal to the amount of silver that had been stolen from him. Wenamun took lodging in a tavern, where he set up a shrine to Amun-of-the-Road.

Upon learning of Wenamun's arrival, Zekerbaal ordered him out of the port. For twenty-nine days Wenamun defied Zekerbaal's daily order to leave, saying he would depart only when there was a ship available that was bound for Egypt.

Wenamun and Zekerbaal

Zekerbaal's attitude changed, however, when one of his servants fell into an ecstatic fit. The servant cried out that "the image" of Amun and the Egyptian envoy (Wenamun) should be brought to the palace, because Amun had sent them. And so, just as Wenamun was about to set sail, he was ordered to stay.

The next morning, Wenamun met with Zekerbaal at the palace. The prince asked for his written orders, but Wenamun had already given them to King Smendes. They argued briefly about the nature of Wenamun's ship before getting down to business: Wenamun explained that he had come for the timber, which Zekerbaal's predecessors had always given to Egypt. Zekerbaal agreed that they had given timber to Egypt, but only in exchange for six shiploads of Egyptian goods. Wenamun had brought nothing. Zekerbaal expressed sympathy that Wenamun had been made to undertake this task with no support. Formerly, it would not have been so.

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This remark insulted Wenamun. He declared that he did have support—from Amun, lord of all ships and of Lebanon. In the past, those treasures were sent only because the kings could not send life and health. Amun, who was the lord of life and health, granted these instead of mere material goods. If Zekerbaal were to provide the timber, the god would assure his prosperity and that of his people. Nevertheless, Wenamun dispatched a letter to Smendes, who replied with gold, silver, and other valuables.

Satisfied at last, Zekerbaal ordered the timber to be cut. But he was still unhappy with Wenamun's conduct. He warned that if the Egyptian attempted to transport the timber during the stormy season, he would face Zekerbaal's wrath. Wenamun soothed his host by proposing the wording of an inscription that would memorialize Zekerbaal's generosity.

Wenamun's subsequent attempts to obtain ships to return to Egypt were thwarted. Frustrated, he watched helplessly as southbound migratory birds passed by on their way to his homeland. Learning this, Zekerbaal sent wine, a sheep, and an Egyptian songstress to cheer Wenamun until the next day.

At last, Wenamun was able to leave. Once he was on his way, a storm took him to the country of Alashiya (on the island of Cyprus), where the inhabitants attempted to kill him. Wenamun fought his way to the home of Princess Hatiba, who, by means of an interpreter who spoke Egyptian, offered Wenamun safety.

Although we know that Wenamun survived to file his report, any other troubles that assailed him are unknown, as the papyrus is broken at this point.

Noreen Doyle

See also: Fantasy.

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Werewolves

Werewolves are the unfortunate beings that are believed to have the ability to transform into wolves and then back into human beings. The English word *werewolf* is a descendant of the Old English *wer* (man) and *wulf* (wolf).

Indo-European Origins

The concept of the werewolf is common to many Indo-European cultures that can be traced back to Russia and the Ukraine in the fifth to the third millennium B.C.E.

The Indo-European word for wolf has been reconstructed by scholars as *wlkwos.* Many modern words for werewolf can be traced to this Indo-European word for wolf: *vulcolaca* (Old Slavic), *vukodlak* (Slovenian), *wilkolak* (Polish), *vrykolokas* (Greek), *vurvolak* (Albanian), and *varcolac* (Romanian). These words also are used to mean "vampire" in some areas. As most of these terms are a combination of the words *wolf* and *pelt,* they can be loosely translated as wolf-coat.

The Romanian varcolac is sometimes a vampire, and sometimes a wolf that eats the Moon, causing eclipses. In other cases, the varcolac is a person who periodically descends into a deep sleep from which his or her soul wanders forth in the shape of a wolf. This may be a dim recollection of ancient shamanic traditions.

Shamans

The earliest werewolves in Indo-European cultures were probably shamans, or spiritual leaders. A shaman placed himself in a trance to travel to the realm of the dead, and he used his great power to return safely to the realm of the living. He also might seek to be possessed by a creature of great strength to help him in this journey.

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That some shamans in Indo-European cultures had a special relationship with the wolf is evident in many cultural traditions. The Magyar shamans of Hungary were said to have been fathered by wolves. Slavic priests were referred to as *volkhvy,* which derived from the word for wolf, *velku*.

These shamans were not only magicians and holy men, but also often warriors. Many warrior societies developed among Indo-European cultures. One of the best known is the so-called berserkers. Though the group's name literally meant "bear-shirt," such warriors also were identified with wolves.

In the poem *Hrafnsmal,* which was composed in Iceland around 900 C.E., the Ulfedhnar, or wolf-warriors of Norway, are described as those who carry swords and participate in slaughter. The only armor worn by the Ulfedhnar was the *vargstakkar,* or wolf-shirt. The warriors, who could become possessed by the spirit of wolves due to their shamanic magic, were outside the realm of ordinary people. Often, they could kill without consequences when they were so possessed.

Other Early Traditions

Those who did not belong to these societies and broke the laws of the tribe also were identified with wolves. In Germanic areas, criminals were referred to as *vargr i veum,* or the "wolf in the temple." These men's lives were forfeited to anyone who caught them.

In the Middle Ages, condemned criminals who had taken to the forest to hide were referred to as wolfsheads. In Saxon, the gallows was called the *varg treo,* or wolf tree. The association with criminality and the wolf appears even in Sanskrit, where *vrka* was the word for a highwayman.

The ability to shape-shift into a wolf is a common element among many folklore traditions. In *Saga of the Volsungs,* composed in thirteenth-century Iceland, Sigmund and his son, Sinfjotli, became wolves. During their time as werewolves, they killed many men in the land of King Siggeir, who was responsible for the death of much of Sigmund's family. Eventually, Sigmund and Sinfjotli removed the coats and burned them. As there were no wolves in Iceland, this story may be a reference to earlier initiation rites of young men into the wolf-warrior cults of Northern Europe.

Another werewolf appears in this saga. When Sigmund and his nine brothers were captured by King Siggeir, they were bound in chains. Each night, a wolf came and devoured one of them. Sigmund, who had been left for last, killed the werewolf, which was believed to be King Siggeir's mother wearing wolf skin.

In 1187, Giraldus Cambrensis, a Welsh writer and historian, related the following werewolf tale from Ireland:

A priest traveling from Ulster to Meath was waylaid on the road at night by a wolf. The wolf spoke to him and pleaded with him not to be afraid. The wolf called upon the almighty God and invoked the Trinity and, in time, convinced the priest that he meant no harm.

When the priest was at last convinced to put aside his fear, the wolf told him that he and a companion had been placed under a curse and that his companion was near death. The priest followed the wolf to where a she-wolf lay and administered extreme unction. The male wolf then ripped open the she-wolf's coat and revealed an old woman who had been trapped inside. The wolf and woman thanked the priest for his kindness, and he went on his way.

Werewolf Trials

Most werewolf legal cases were recorded between 1520 and 1630. In that time, it is estimated that 30,000 people in France were identified as werewolves. Many were tortured into confessions, and many were executed. For those who survived, the stigma of being identified as a werewolf became a lifelong curse.

One of the most famous werewolf cases took place in 1603. Jean Grenier, who was only thirteen years old at the time, was accused

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of changing into the form of a wolf and killing and eating other local children. Grenier apparently believed he could become a wolf, and at least one witness claimed to have seen him change form. However, the judge in this case ruled that Grenier was not a werewolf, but a boy deluded into believing he could change shape. It was determined that Grenier was mentally deficient and therefore could not be executed for his crimes. He was sentenced to life imprisonment in a monastery, where he died seven years later at age twenty.

Many werewolves were executed in Germany. In 1589, Peter Stubbe was convicted of killing fifteen people when in werewolf form. His lover and his daughter were convicted as accomplices and were burned at the stake. Stubbe was strapped to a cartwheel and had his flesh pulled from his body with red-hot pincers. After his arms and legs were broken, Stubbe was beheaded.

In some stories, it is indeed a man-wolf rather than a true wolf that is encountered. In one tale, a man who had persecuted those he believed to be evil was lost in the woods at night. A werewolf approached him and led him to a house, where the werewolf performed human tasks, such as opening doors and pouring soup into a bowl. This werewolf walked upright and had hands, rather than paws. In the morning, the man discovered that the wolfish visage of his benefactor had disappeared. He learned that this was one of the men whom he had persecuted and whose family he had sent to the executioner. In this case, it was the werewolf that showed compassion and mercy, and the man who was revealed to be the monster.

Real or Imaginary?

The belief that werewolves do not truly exist, but are merely deluded people, is older than the modern practice of psychiatry. In 1590, Henri Boguet, a French judge who presided over many cases involving witches and werewolves, declared that no one could truly change his or her shape. A person could merely be deluded by Satan into believing he or she could change. Anyone who saw the person change was equally deluded by Satan. Boguet also allowed that certain "natural maladies" could cause people to be so deluded, and that Satan might not actively be involved in each and every case.

The belief that a person can change into a wolf has not completely died out, though modern cases consist of individuals who are habitual drug users or who have been diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder, such as schizophrenia. Two cases were reported in the *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal* in 1975. Another case was presented in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* in 1977. The medical term for this condition is *lycanthrope,* which is Greek for "wolf-man."

By the twentieth century, werewolves had almost completely retreated into the realm of fiction. But as recently as 1993, the Associated Press reported that the *Evenimentul Ziliei,* a daily newspaper in Romania, had urged its readers to use garlic to protect themselves on Saint Andrew's Day against ghosts and werewolves.

The concept of a "beast within" has remained popular with modern readers of fiction and the moviegoing public. From Robert Louis Stevenson's novel *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) to tales of the Incredible Hulk, people remain fascinated with the idea that animal ferocity, uncivilized and untamable, lurks within us all.

The first movie to feature a werewolf character was *The Werewolf,* an eighteen-minute movie filmed in 1913. In this story, a Navajo girl became a werewolf in order to exact revenge for her father's murder. Since then, werewolves have been the focus of more than fifty movies, including *The Wolf Man* (1941), *The Werewolf* (1956), *I Was a Teenage Werewolf* (1957), *The Curse of the Werewolf* (1960), and *An American Werewolf in London* (1981). And in the 1985 film *Ladyhawke,* a man was cursed to become a werewolf every night and change back into a man during the day.

Werewolves in recent fiction obey different rules than those found in history. Usually,

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fictional werewolves are created through a gypsy's curse or when a character is bitten by a werewolf. Most of these werewolves transform only during the full moon and must be dispatched with silver bullets.

Marella Sands

See also: Shape-Shifters.

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West African Mythology

The region of West Africa includes many nations, some peaceful and some troubled by civil war or corrupt politics. The list of nations includes Benin, Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, the Ivory Coast, Mali, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. Each of these countries is home to several ethnic groups, and each group has its own mythology.

The myths of these people are a part of a living religion and should be treated with respect by storytellers.

Benin

The supreme god of the Fon people of Benin is Nana Buluku. He is the father of the twins Lisa and Mawu, deities of the Sun and Moon. The creator god is Mawu. An aid to Mawu was Aido-Hwedo, the great serpent power, a primal force who assisted in the ordering of the cosmos. Above the earth, Aido-Hwedo had 3,500 coils, and the same number below; together, they supported Mawu's creation. Fa is the god of destiny, who provided the personal fate for each human. A son of Mawu and Lisa is Gu, god of iron and war.

Other deities include Age, patron of hunters. Age is in charge of the wilderness, the uninhabited bush, and the animals therein. Legba is a trickster god of language and fate, Minona is a goddess diviner, and Sogbo is the god of thunder, lightning, and fire.

Other interesting characters of Fon traditional beliefs are Honsi and Honsu, a pair of mythical twins with magical powers, and Yehwe Zogbanu, the thirty-horned forest-dwelling giant.

Cameroon

The Bamileke and the Bangwa people recognize one supreme god called Si. But they are more likely to pray to ancestral spirits for help or guidance. Si remains a rather remote figure.

The Efik of Cameroon and Nigeria

Abassi, or Obassi, is the Efik creator god. His wife, Atai, brought death to humankind. Atai convinced her husband to allow their human children, one man and one woman, to live on Earth. The children were not allowed to reproduce or work so that they would not overwhelm Abassi in strength and wisdom.

When the first humans broke those rules, Atai killed them both and caused strife, death, and war between their children. Abassi and Atai were so disgusted that they withdrew from the affairs of their descendants.

Ghana

Nyambe is the creator god of the Asante people. He planted the tree of life in his garden then moved it to heaven when humans failed to appreciate it.

Perhaps the best-known being in the myth and folklore of West Africa is Ananse (also spelled Anansi). He is the trickster spider-being of the Asante and other West African peoples, and a figure in Caribbean folklore. Dubiaku is a culture hero of the Asante people and the only mortal to outwit death. He is known to the Asante people living in Nigeria as well.

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Wuni is the creator god of the Dagamba people. One myth says that the people sent a dog to Dagamba to tell him what a terribly hard life they led, but the dog got sidetracked by a juicy bone. So a goat was sent, but its bleating was so difficult to understand that Wuni misunderstood and decided that life would be ended by death.

The Ivory Coast

The supreme deity of the Akan is Nyame, who created all things and from whom lesser gods derive their power. Nyame is not worshiped directly but is approached through intermediaries. These lesser gods, called *abosom,* may inhabit lakes, streams, rivers, or trees. Below them in status are minor deities whose power is invoked through amulets or charms worn for protection. The *samanfo,* or ancestral spirits, are very important to the Akan people, since the ancestors are believed to protect their descendants.

Now predominantly Muslim, the Mande mix elements of Islam with their traditional beliefs. The Mande creation myth, for example, describes the biblical account of creation, but it also includes the creation of two sets of twins from seeds. These twins were commanded to populate the earth and teach their children how to grow crops. The twins created music and prayed for rain. The Niger River is said to have been formed from the resulting floods.

Mali

The majority of Mali's population is Muslim, but some people still practice indigenous religions. Yo is a primeval world spirit in the belief system of the Bambara people. This trickster is made up of both male and female elements. Yo allowed Pemba, the creator god, and Pemba's brother, Faro, god of sky and water, to visit Earth.

Pemba is a vegetation deity, and Faro created humankind. Faro is a remote deity who visits Earth only once every 400 years. Musso-Koroni is the Bambara goddess of disorder. She is the wife of Pemba but dislikes him and prefers to wander, causing sadness and disorder wherever she goes.

Amma is the sky god and the creator of the universe for the Dogon people. Nommo was the first living being created by Amma. Nommo multiplied himself into four sets of twins. One twin rebelled against the others, causing unrest in the world. To restore stability, Amma cut Nommo up and placed the pieces evenly around the world to balance it. Shrines to the ancestral spirits known as Binu commemorate this event.

Lebe is the Dogon earth god, concerned with the agricultural cycle. Tradition claims that Lebe visits the *hogons,* or priests, every night as a serpent who licks their skin to fill them with renewed life force and purity.

Ogo is the trickster god, also known as the Pale Fox or Jackal. Ogo's tricky children are Andumbulu and Yeban, the underworld spirits. Yasigi is the goddess of dancing, beer, and masks.

Nigeria

Nigeria is the home of several different ethnic groups. The culture that is perhaps most familiar to the people of the United States is that of the Yoruba people. Many Yoruba were brought to the New World as slaves, and they brought their beliefs with them.

The Bura and Pabir Peoples

Hyel, or Hyel-Taku, is the supreme god of the Bura and Pabir people. He is worshipped indirectly, through the *haptu,* or personal gods. Some of these personal gods belong to particular clans, and there is no single haptu for a whole tribe.

The Ibo People

The supreme Ibo deity is Chuku, or Chukwu, from whom all good comes. Ala is his daughter, the earth goddess, mother of all things and spirit of fertility.

Igwe is the sky god. Interestingly, the Ibo do not pray to Igwe for rain, because rainmaking

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is the job of professional tribal rainmakers. Imo Miri is the spirit of rivers. Larger rivers are so holy that it is forbidden for humans to fish in them.

Ekwu, goddess of the hearth, is the women's patron, and Aha Njoku is the goddess of yams, an important crop for the Ibo people, and the patron of the women who care for them. Lesser gods include Mbatuku, spirit of wealth, Agwo, who is always envious of others' wealth, and Ikoro, the spirit of the drum.

The Yoruba People

Olorun is the ruler of the sky and father of the gods Obatala and Odudua (heaven and Earth). He is the deity of peace, harmony, justice, and purity. Obatala is one of the most important Yoruban gods. He created humankind and is the patron of the handicapped. Odudua created the earth. The world began as only water, and Odudua threw soil onto the water. He sent a rooster to scratch at it, which pushed it around and created the dry land.

Yemaja, who is variously described as the daughter of Olorun, Odudua, or Obatala, is the mother goddess of the living ocean. She is the patron of birth and is worshipped primarily by women. Her brother and husband is Aganju. When Orungan, their son, raped Yemaja, her body burst open and fifteen gods were born, including Shango.

Shango, the god of thunder and the ancestor of the Yoruba people, has three wives. The first is Oya, who stole Shango's secrets of magic; the second is Oshun, the river goddess, who is Shango's favorite; and the third is Oba, who was cast away by Shango to become the turbulent Oba River. Oshun, Shango's favorite wife, is the goddess of love, pleasure, beauty, and diplomacy. While she is generous and kind to humankind, Oshun has a fierce temper.

Shakpana is another of Yemaja's sons, an angry god who afflicts humans with disease and madness. Eshu is a trickster god to whom offerings must be made before any magic ritual may be performed. He is the protector of travelers and a teacher who uses tricks to make his point.

Olokun is the sea deity, seen in both male and female versions, who lives in an underwater palace and symbolizes deep wisdom. Olokun is also the patron of those who were carried off in the slave trade.

Aja is a forest goddess who teaches her followers the use of medicinal herbs. Oya is the goddess of fire and wind, a warrior deity whose anger causes hurricanes. She is also the patron of change and guardian of the gates of death.

In addition to the deities, there are other beings in Yoruban mythology. The orishas are the guardian spirits and include Babalu-Aye, the spirit of healing. Egbere always weeps and carries a mat. Whoever steals his mat will become rich.

This sampling of the mythologies of West Africa gives storytellers a hint of the riches to be found by researching them more thoroughly.

See also: Yoruban Storytelling.

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White Horses of England

The white horses of England are among a number of figures, usually of animals, that are cut into hillsides. The turf has been cut away, revealing the figures in the chalk underneath. Several white horses appear in Wiltshire, where there are nine large equine images. It is impossible to accurately date these figures, but they are estimated to have been carved anywhere from 4,000 to 2,000

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years ago. The reason for the carvings is unknown.

The white horse with the greatest number of folk beliefs attached to it is the Uffington horse, the most stylized, least naturalistic, of the horses. The Uffington horse is said to be able to grant the wish of anyone who stands on its eye and turns around three times clockwise. This belief can no longer be tested, however. So many people walked on the horse that they began to damage it, and it is no longer accessible to the public.

Once every hundred years, the Uffington horse is said to gallop across the sky to be reshod by Wayland, the wonder-smith of Anglo-Saxon mythology. Wayland's smithy is said to have stood near where the Uffington horse was carved. It is also said that when King Arthur awakes from his magical sleep, as some believe he will, the Uffington horse will rise up and dance on nearby Dragon Hill.

In other local folk beliefs, the Uffington white horse is said to be a mare with an invisible foal on the hill beside her. Every night, the mare and foal come down the hill to graze at the slope known as the manger. They drink at nearby Woolstone Wells, which is believed to have been formed by the mare's hoofprint.

White horse figures in other locations also are said to come to life and go to drink. The Tan Hill horse is supposed to come to life when the church clock of All Cannings strikes midnight. It then goes down to a pond to drink. The Westbury white horse is also a thirsty one. It wakes when the Bratton church clock strikes midnight and goes down to Briddle Springs to drink.

See also: Motifs.

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White Magic

White magic is used solely for beneficial purposes. It can be used toward the personal well-being of the magician or with the intention of helping or healing another. White magic traditionally is said to draw its power from heavenly forces. White magic spells are the essence of good, the very opposite of those used in black magic.

White magic spells are never used for personal gain or to harm others. They are used to protect, bless, and heal those in need. White magic also can hold off black magic and break ill wishes and curses.

White magic is found in folktales and fantasy stories around the world. Merlin, the powerful magician of Arthurian lore, practices white magic. Merlin is part demon (or part fairy), yet he chooses to stay on the side of right. The magician Michael Scott of Scottish folklore kept his soul safe from the devil by never straying from white magic.

Perhaps the most familiar practitioners of white magic are the fairy godmothers found in more than 700 versions of the "Cinderella" story. These benevolent fairies cast spells to help the protagonists of their stories to live happily ever after.

Magicians are extremely popular in modern fantasy fiction, more so than in the fiction of earlier eras. Gandalf, in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* series (1954–1955), is a powerful white wizard who refuses to use his magic for ill, even when tempted by the One Ring. And, in J.K. Rowling's more recent fictional series about the adventures of Harry Potter (1997–2007), Harry is a powerful wizard who uses his powers for good.

It is important to note that Harry Potter is a rare exception to the norm. Magicians generally are not the heroes of the stories in which they appear. In works with a magic user as protagonist, the author must include some check on the power of that character. It is for good reason that Gandalf disappears for a significant portion of the *Lord of the Rings*

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series—if he remained, there would be little worry for the other characters, which would make for a rather dull plot.

See also: Black Magic.

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Wicked Stepmothers

The character of the wicked or evil stepmother is common in the world's folklore. Scholars and storytellers have long debated the reason for the existence of this character type.

Stepmothers were common in societies where women were likely to die in childbirth or shortly afterward. A man often would take a second wife to replace his children's deceased biological mother. The motif continues today as a result of modern-day patterns of divorce and remarriage.

Stepmothers in folklore are almost always wicked. This is probably due to two issues: the psychology of the child, who sees the stepmother as an intruder who has done away with the birth mother, and inheritance laws. A second wife rarely felt that the first wife's child, rather than her own offspring, should inherit everything, and a first child would not wish to share an inheritance with interlopers, such as stepsisters.

Some of the most familiar wicked stepmothers appear in the many "Cinderella" variants, in which the wicked stepmother is often accompanied by wicked stepsisters. In most of these stories, protection of the stepmother's own children is the most common motivation for her wickedness. This is, perhaps, more understandable than the truly evil nature of the "Snow White" stories, in which the stepmother is consumed by jealousy of the heroine.

There are several odd variants to the wicked stepmother theme. In the English tale of "Kate Crackernuts," the story's heroine is not the first daughter but the stepdaughter. The stepdaughter is a lively, active character, and the first daughter is more passive. In the German tale "The Juniper Tree," the stepmother murders and eats her stepson. She is then slain by the stepson in the form of a bird-spirit, and he is restored to life.

In the Grimm Brothers' version of "Hansel and Gretel," it is the stepmother who cast the children away. In earlier versions, it was their own mother.

See also: Motifs.

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William Tell

(Swiss)

Few medieval heroes are as widely known as William Tell. His exploits have been celebrated by poets, playwrights, and composers.

The Story of William Tell

A cruel Austrian official called Gessler was assigned to Switzerland. Gessler arranged to have a pole planted in the square of Altdorf with a hat at the top in Austrian colors. All those who passed had to bow to the hat in order to show their respect. William Tell and his son passed through the square and did not salute the hat.

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Tell was arrested and brought before Gessler. His punishment for this disrespect was to shoot an apple off his son's head. Tell, a famous marksman, accomplished this, but he had hidden a second arrow under his quiver. He told Gessler, "It was to pierce your heart if my first arrow killed my son."

In spite of his vast reputation, it is very likely that William Tell never existed, and it is certain that the story of the apple is pure fiction. Even so, the Swiss proudly recognize the legend, and the marksman's image is on the back of the five-franc coin.

Truth Versus Fiction

Details have been added to the story over time in an attempt to make it seem true.

The earliest work that makes any allusion to the adventures of William Tell is the chronicle of the younger Melchior Russ, written in 1482. As the shooting of the apple was supposed to have taken place in 1296, this leaves an interval of 186 years between the event and the written account. In the interim, neither a Tell nor a William, nor the apple, nor the cruelty of Gessler received any mention in historic records. Also, the charters of Kussnach (the village where the events supposedly took place) have been examined and show that no man by the name of Gessler ever ruled there.

Contemporary chroniclers described in detail the tyrannical acts of the Duke of Austria that goaded the Swiss to rebellion. Yet they do not once mention Tell's name or betray the slightest acquaintance with his exploits or with his existence. These painstaking medieval chroniclers would never have kept silent about the adventures of this character if they had known about them.

William Tell, the crossbow-wielding hero of Swiss folktales, prepares to shoot an apple off his son's head. This colored print, or acquantinta, was made around 1820. *(Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY)*

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The greatest proof that William Tell's story is not historical comes from an almost identical earlier tale recorded by the medieval Danish author Saxo Grammaticus. He tells of a skilled archer named Palnatoki, one of King Harold's bodyguards, who was envied by the others. Once, when Palnatoki had drunk too much, he boasted about his skill, saying that he could hit the smallest apple placed a long way off at the first shot.

The envious warriors turned the mind of the king against Palnatoki. Harold declared that Palnatoki must prove the truth of his boast by shooting an apple off his son's head. Like Tell, Palnatoki did so, and like Tell, he hid another arrow. He told the king the reason: If he had accidentally killed his son, he would then have killed Harold.

Versions of the same story also appear in Central Asia, Finland, Norway, Persia, and Russia.

See also: Culture Heroes.

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Wise Man or Woman

They stand in the shadows of kings, point the way to questing heroes, and shelter the dispossessed and help them regain their birthright. They teach valuable lessons to those willing to learn, and inflict punishment upon the stubborn and steadfastly ignorant. Sometimes, they are gods or fairies in disguise. They are the wise man and wise woman, and the importance of their role in story cannot be overlooked.

Every hero or heroine setting forth on a quest needs guidance. Most traditional heroes step out into the world with only a vague idea of their goals and an even less distinct notion of how to attain them. A prince seeks the water of life for his dying father or a young wife must travel to the ends of the earth to find her vanished husband. Sometimes, they are thrust out into the world with no goal other than survival.

These heroes are armed with courage, optimism, beauty (usually), and the strength of a noble heart. Yet they cannot accomplish their goals without specific knowledge about their quests and the obstacles that must be overcome.

Help for the Hero

The source of this crucial knowledge is often the archetypal wise man or woman. The wise man or woman appears to the hero early in the quest, often just as the hero rides forth or when his or her plight seems hopeless. The wise man or woman may be in the guise of an animal, elderly beggar, dwarf, or crone.

The wise man or woman asks the hero where he or she is headed or pleads for a bit of food. How the questing hero responds to the wretched figure by the path often determines whether the journey will succeed or end in disaster. The wise man or woman knows the hero's goal and can offer specific instructions on what to avoid, what signs to look for, what tasks will be required, and the one hidden weakness of the demon, monster, or evil king that stands in the hero's way.

The young prince in "The Water of Life" shares his meager meal with a dwarf. In return, he is given detailed instructions on how to find the precious water.

The abandoned wife who seeks her husband in the Norwegian fairy tale "East of the Sun, West of the Moon" encounters three old women in succession; none of them helps her directly, but each gives her a token that eventually proves useful and then sends her on to the next helper. Step by step the young woman makes her way to the place where her husband lies hidden.

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In the tale "Eros and Psyche," also known in the Roman form as "Cupid and Psyche," a jealous Aphrodite gives the mortal girl Psyche the seemingly impossible task of descending to the underworld and bringing back a box of Persephone's beauty. Psyche is about to give up in despair, when she is given instructions on how to safely pass through the underworld by, of all things, a sentient tower. In some versions, the nature deity Pan instructs Psyche.

Heroes often receive help from completely unexpected sources. Many of the terrible giants, ogres, and demons that menace fairy tale heroes have mothers and wives who are much more sympathetic. Explanation is never given as to why the female companions of these monsters are sympathetic to the heroes.

The wife of Grandfather Wisdom, in the Czech tale "The Ogre with the Three Golden Hairs," not only hides the hero from her man-eating spouse, but actually plucks out the three golden hairs the hero needs from her spouse's head or chin. She teases out of Grandfather Wisdom the answers to the three puzzles the hero had promised to solve and sends the young man on his way while her husband is safely asleep. In other variants, Grandfather Wisdom is a giant, a man-eating ogre, or the devil himself.

Testing the Hero

Sometimes there is no quest, and the role of the wise man or woman is simply to test the protagonist and offer a reward or punishment.

One of the most familiar of these morality tales is the Grimm Brothers' "Toads and Diamonds." A typically abused and overworked stepdaughter is fetching water for her ungrateful family when an elderly woman asks her for a drink. Unhesitatingly, the girl fills the old woman's cup and gives it to her with a gracious word. The old lady, who is a fairy in disguise, rewards the girl by causing a flower or gemstone to drop from her lips with every word she speaks.

When the stepmother discovers the girl's newfound treasure, she sends her own daughter to the well with strict instructions to be nice to any old woman she might meet there. Unfortunately for the daughter, the fairy is disguised not as a hag but as an elegant lady. She asks for a drink. The daughter, who had only been instructed to be kind to old hags (the girl being apparently as dim as she is rude and ugly), insolently tells her she can fetch her own drink. Displeased, the fairy curses the girl to spit out a toad or serpent with every word.

In another Grimm Brothers fairy tale, "Mother Holle," the eponymous wise woman is a powerful earth spirit who controls the weather. She is able to send snowstorms across the world with a shake of her featherbed. The virtuous girl who works for Mother Holle diligently and without complaint for an entire season is rewarded with a shower of gold. Her lazy stepsister is sent home covered in sticky black tar.

Fairy Godmothers

The figure of the fairy godmother has been made famous by the many versions of the Cinderella story. She is either the spirit of the heroine's dead mother or a kindly fairy.

The fairy godmother is less a tester of virtue than a supernatural matchmaker. She magically erases the worst obstacles between the heroine and her prince. She even attempts to act as a chaperone by setting up the spells so that all the magical implements she has provided will vanish at midnight.

Mythic Figures

Some wise figures wield great power. The myths of ancient Greece, Rome, and India are filled with gods that wander in the guise of helpless old mortals.

Hera, the Greek queen of the gods, approached the hero Jason in disguise as an old crone who was unable to cross a river. Jason carried her over, losing one of his sandals in the process. Hera blessed him in his quest to

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regain his kingdom and continued to watch over his journeys.

In the great Hindu epic the *Mahabharata,* the god Krishna offered Prince Arjuna spiritual advice along with his services as charioteer.

Hags and Wizards

In British fairy tales, handsome young knights were often approached by hideous hags. These repulsive creatures demanded a kiss, lovemaking, or marriage. The rare knight of quality who accepted this challenge received an unexpected reward when the crone turned into a beautiful maiden and, in some cases, conferred kingship upon him.

This tale was told in the late fourteenth century by Geoffrey Chaucer in "The Wife of Bath," one of the stories in *The Canterbury Tales* (c. 1387–1400). The Arthurian story of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell has a similar plot. In some of the oldest, pre-Christian versions, joining with the hag symbolized the king's marriage to his land, and the crone's transformation into a maiden represented the rejuvenation of the earth in the wake of this divine marriage.

Wizards, powerful magic users of folklore and fiction, sometimes appear in the role of the wise old man. The most famous of these helper wizards, at least in the West, is King Arthur's aide, Merlin. Another well-known wizard is J.R.R. Tolkien's Gandalf, who is both a hero and a wise helper.

A common theme in fiction that utilizes wise characters such as wizards is the realization that there is more to the universe than what is obvious. This theme also encompasses the idea that the desire for power is not enough for an individual to become part of this otherworld. Ambition must be tempered with wisdom. In the role-playing game "Mage: The Ascension," for example, the potential for magic and a greater understanding of the universe lies sleeping in every human.

Wisdom in the Modern Age

In many ways, but not universally, modern Western culture values youth and vitality over age and wisdom. Nevertheless, wise elders still are considered by many to be people of authority whose insight is sought in solving community problems. Native American tribal elders; the shamans still found in a few tribal cultures, particularly in South America and parts of Russia; the patriarchs and matriarchs of extended Asian and European families; and even, in a more humorous form, the imperious Jewish mothers and grandmothers of folklore are treated with deference and respect.

It is also true that age and wisdom are not always connected. Wisdom can also be found in the young, and the aged do not always possess it.

Shanti Fader

See also: Archetype.

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Wise Men of Chelm

(Polish)

The townspeople of Chelm, Poland, have been made famous for their bizarre wisdom through Jewish folktales.

As the saying goes, "It's not that the people of Chelm are fools; it's just that foolish things keep happening to them." Of course, another saying announces that when two angels were delivering souls, the bag ripped open, and all the foolish souls landed in Chelm.

Tracing the age of the tales about the wise men of Chelm is difficult. A comprehensive collection has never been compiled, and there is no solid proof of their origin. Scholars guess that some of the tales date from the late

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Middle Ages, while others are almost certainly more recent. And since new tales are constantly being added to the repertory, it has become almost impossible to separate the old tales from the new.

A few examples of the wise men of Chelm's way of thinking follow:

The wise men of Chelm began to worry about how much they were worrying. So they decided to each pay a man one ruble to do the worrying for them. But, they thought, if he had all that money, why would he worry?

One of the wise men of Chelm went to his doctor, worried because he talked to himself. The doctor told him it was no real problem. After all, he was only talking to himself. The man complained, "But I'm such a bore!"

When the wise men of Chelm appointed one among them as chief sage, they decided he must have golden shoes to wear to show how special he was. But the first time he wore them, mud covered the gold. So the wise men made leather shoes to cover the golden shoes. But now the golden shoes could not be seen. So the wise men cut holes in the leather shoes to let the gold show through. But now mud seeped into the holes! So the wise men stuffed straw into the holes. Now the gold could not be seen. At last they came up with a solution. To show how special he was, the chief sage wore his golden shoes on his hands.

A house caught fire in Chelm on a dark, moonless night. Everyone agreed that it was fortunate that the fire was burning so brightly, or they would never have been able to see to put it out. Fortunate, indeed: If nothing else, the wise men of Chelm are eternally optimistic.

See also: Fools; Wise (or Foolish, or Mad) Men of Gotham.

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Wise (or Foolish, or Mad) Men of Gotham

(English)

Gotham is a real city in Nottinghamshire, England, but it has become known as the site of the folktales about the wise men of Gotham. Also known as the foolish men of Gotham or even the madmen of Gotham, they sometimes seem more wise than foolish.

According to a story from the late twelfth century, the people of Gotham heard that King John was going to visit them. They did not want him there, as he and his retinue and retainers would be far too expensive a group of visitors for their town. So they deliberately started acting in foolish or even wildly insane ways. They did stunts, such as trying to drown a fish or cage a bird (fittingly enough, a cuckoo) by joining hands. King John heard of this behavior and decided to stay elsewhere. The villagers were said to have remarked, presumably smirking as they did so, that more fools passed through Gotham than remained in it. There is no historical evidence to prove this story.

In 1540, a collection of twenty tales of Gotham was published. A number of towns claim to be the village of origin. A town in Sussex, as well as almost fifty other villages in England and Wales, maintain that the silly tales belong to them. Even Mother Goose stepped into the fray:

Three wise men of Gotham went to sea
in a bowl.
If the bowl had been stronger,
My song had been longer.

In 1807, the American author Washington Irving dubbed New York City "Gotham," since he considered it a city of fools. The name stuck. For instance, the comic book character Batman, the caped crusader and avenger, lives in none other than Gotham City.

See also: Fools; Wise Men of Chelm.

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Wizards

In world folklore, a wizard is a usually male, often aged figure of immense magical power. In Western folk tradition, wizards are usually portrayed with flowing robes, a pointed hat, and a long white beard. A wizard can be on the side of either good or evil.

Wizards are found in many fantasy tales as well, sometimes as heroic figures and sometimes as frauds.

Merlin

Merlin, the wizard of Arthurian legend, appears in numerous and varied forms. Authors have portrayed him as a magician, a conjurer, a student of alchemy, and a prophet.

T.H. White, in *The Once and Future King* (1958), described Merlin as living backward in time, which meant that he could remember the future. Marion Zimmer Bradley's feminist retelling of Arthur's story, *The Mists of Avalon* (1982), makes Merlin a title that is held by high-ranking Druid priests, rather than the name of a single man. Sometimes, Merlin directs and influences the events of the Arthurian tales (including the birth of the king). In other versions, he is swept along by events, helplessly able to foresee but not prevent them. Often, Merlin is too wise to try, and he merely passes along his visions, knowing that what will happen is what is meant to be.

Merlin arranged the tryst between Uther Pendragon and Igraine of Cornwall (in some versions using magical means) that resulted in Arthur's conception. After the child's birth, Merlin hid him away in Sir Ector's court to grow up in anonymous safety until it was time for him to claim the throne. *The Once and Future King* begins with Merlin overseeing the education of the young Arthur, whom he nicknames Wart.

Merlin, the great wizard of Arthurian lore, counseled the young King Arthur. This illustration is from about 1350; it now resides in the British Library in London. *(Art Resource, NY)*

Long before Arthur's time, Merlin had helped the warlord Vortigern discover why the castle he was building was continually unbuilt each night. Merlin directed Vortigern to dig underneath the foundation. When he did so, a pair of dragons was discovered fighting in an underground cavern. Released, the dragons streaked off into the sky, symbolizing Uther and Arthur, the great kings to come. Vortigern finally was able to complete his fortress.

At the end of his life (or the beginning, in White's version), Merlin was seduced by the sorceress Nimue (sometimes called Viviane). She cajoled the wizard into teaching her the secrets of his magic, and then trapped him inside a tree, a cave, or a hollow hill. In some

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retellings, Merlin was killed and sealed inside this tomb. In others, he lives on and will emerge upon King Arthur's return.

It is difficult to understand why someone as wise and powerful as Merlin could not prevent such an untimely and undignified fate. The Nimue story could be interpreted as a warning against the treacherous wiles of women, but it seems unlikely that Merlin actually would let himself be tricked and imprisoned in this way. Far more probable is the idea that he foresaw Nimue's intentions, and either he resigned himself to retirement (knowing what was coming and that he could not avert it) or he actually was looking forward to getting some rest after centuries of advising the kings of Britain. Unfortunately for King Arthur, Merlin's wisdom was not available during the darkest hours of Arthur's reign.

Tolkien's Wizards

In *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955), British author J.R.R. Tolkien created a race of wizards, the Istari, for his world of Middle Earth. The Istari were a subgroup of demigod-like beings known as Maiar. The Maiar could take on human form and interact with living creatures. Their task was to defeat the evil Maia Sauron.

The two most important Istari are Saruman the White, whose task was to gather knowledge and whose name derives from the Old English word for knowledge, and Gandalf the Grey, whose task was the seeking of wisdom and whose name likewise derives from the Old English word for wisdom. Aficionados of *The Lord of the Rings* know the fate that befalls each of the two wizards and which path Tolkien clearly preferred. That Tolkien was influenced, especially in the character of Gandalf, by the Finnish *Kalevala* can be seen through comparisons between Gandalf and the Finnish wizard Vainamoinen.

The Wizard of Oz

Created by American author L. Frank Baum and first introduced in his *Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), the Wizard of Oz was the ruler of the land of Oz. He lived in the Emerald City.

Dorothy Gale and her three friends went to ask the wizard for help; he responded that they must first complete a dangerous mission, bring him an evil witch's broom, before he would grant their requests.

Upon the friends' successful completion of the task, they returned to the Emerald City. There, they discovered that Oz was not a wizard at all. He was just an ordinary man who had been using tricks to fool everyone into thinking he was "great and powerful."

Modern Wizards

A number of contemporary authors have envisioned entire worlds full of witches and wizards. In Diane Duane's *Young Wizard* series (1983–), wizards can be cats, whales, and even humans; J.K. Rowling's popular Harry Potter books (1997–2007) describe a huge and intricate wizard world just out of sight of the mundane, with its own schools, government, and sports. Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* series (1983–) features a university of wizards who are as arrogant, human, and bumbling as equivalent university professors.

Today, the term *wizard* does not necessarily imply magic. It is more often applied to someone particularly clever in a specific field, such as a computer or gaming wizard, or, as in Pete Townsend's rock opera *Tommy* (1969), a pinball wizard. But, judging from the success of Harry Potter and his kind, the magic-wielding wizard is likely to be with us for some time.

See also: Vainamoinen; Wise Man or Woman; *Retelling: A Story of Gwydion.*

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Wonder Woman

(American)

Wonder Woman was the first strong, female, comic-book character. William Moulton Marston created the Wonder Woman character in 1941, under the pen name of Charles Moulton.

Wonder Woman provides storytellers with an opportunity to tell about a powerful female protagonist and to make a connection to strong female characters of folklore and history. Examples of other such characters are the Irish mythic figure Scathach, the woman warrior who trained the Irish heroes; the Irishwoman Grace O'Malley of the sixteenth century, the warrior pirate who battled and won against the English forces of Queen Elizabeth I; and the Amazons, the mythic warrior women of ancient Greece.

Wonder Woman was an Amazon princess whose real name was Diana. The goddess Aphrodite had created the Amazon women, who were women of superior strength, in her fight against Mars, the god of war. Mars set Hercules upon the Amazonian women and Aphrodite intervened to save them from enslavement. The women were banished from Greece to reside on Paradise Island, where no man set foot.

Eventually, a man, Steve Trevor, crashed on the shores of Paradise Island. A contest was held among the Amazons to determine who would go with Trevor as ambassador to the world of men. Diana entered the contest and won. She was given special powers, an invisible jet, bracelets that could deflect bullets, and a magic lasso forged from the girdle of Gaea, which would cause people ensnared in it to tell the truth.

So armed, she went forth into the world of men, obtaining a position in the military. Going by the name of Diana Prince, she battled villains of all types. Wonder Woman frequently battled Mars and other foes that he sent to harm her. Norse gods such as Odin and Loki also made appearances in the comic books as villains.

In the 1970s, the American actress Lynda Carter brought Wonder Woman to life on television. The character has also appeared in several animated cartoons. Wonder Woman still remains an icon for young girls who are learning to combine strength with femininity.

See also: Culture Heroes.

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World Tree

The World Tree is an unimaginably mighty tree with branches and roots that connect the many realms of existence. Its roots spread into the underworld, its trunk is in the mortal world, and its branches reach up into the heavens. The World Tree, also known as the Tree of Knowledge or the Tree of Life, is a common theme in the world's mythology.

A sampling of the many examples of the World Tree from around the world follow:

- In Babylonian mythology, the World Tree was known as Kuluppu, and it stood on the bank of the Euphrates River. Its wood was said to be medicinal.
- In Hindu mythology, as related in the *Bhagavad Gita,* the World Tree was a great fig tree called Asvattha. Its roots reached down into the underworld, and its branches reached up into the heavens. On its leaves were inscribed the holy words of the Vedas.
- In ancient Persian mythology, the World Tree was also the first tree, the Saena Tree, which grew in the middle

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of the primal ocean, Vourukasha. From the Saena, also known as the Tree of Life or the Tree of All Remedies, came all the world's plants.

- In the Hebrew Kabbalah, the Sephirothal Tree of Life has been pictured as a palm, its ten branches spreading outward from the lowest world up to the heavens. Another image portrays tree upon tree, reaching up to the heavens.
- For the Norse, the World Tree was known as Yggdrasil, from which the chief god, Odin, hung himself for nine days to gain his knowledge of the runes.
- To the Buryat people of Siberia, the World Tree is a great birch or willow. It has no name, but it connects the underneath realm, the present, and the sky, and the point where the tree meets the earth is the center of the world and of all time and space. The Yakut people, also of Siberia, have a similar concept, although they see all trees as sacred.
- The World Tree in Mayan mythology was the Yax Imix Che, the "first green ceiba" tree, with its roots in the underworld and its branches in the heavens. It is also the Wakah Chan, the "raised-up sky," which is symbolized by the Milky Way.

Because the World Tree concept relates to the image of the family tree as well—the linked "world" of a specific family and its generations is often depicted as the image of a tree—the World Tree is clearly a living mythic concept.

See also: Yggdrasil.

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Wurusemu

(Hittite)

Wurusemu was a Hittite goddess, later known as the goddess Hebat.

Wurusemu was the primary goddess in the region of Arrina, where she bore the titles of sun goddess of Arrina, mistress of the Hatti lands, the queen of heaven and Earth, and mistress of the kings and queens of Hatti. It was believed that she directed the government of Hatti.

One of Wurusemu's aspects was as a creator who had made the cedars and the land on which they grew. In another aspect, she was a goddess of battle and was associated with Hittite military victories.

In some myths, Wurusemu was said to be the mother of the storm god.

Ira Spar

See also: Mother Goddess/Earth Mother.

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Yeti

(Tibetan)

Yeti is the name for a large, apelike creature said to live in the Himalayan mountain range of Nepal and Tibet. While similar to the Sasquatch, or Bigfoot, of North America, the yeti is a hardier creature. It is able to live at high altitudes and in cold, inhospitable conditions in which most humans could not survive.

The creature allegedly walks upright, like a hunched-over person. It is roughly the size of a man, but much broader and with oversized feet. Pale brown or snow-white hair covers most of its body.

The first legends of the yeti appeared in Tibetan mythology long before Western explorers arrived in that country. The word yeti may derive from the words *yah* and *teh,* which mean "rock-animal," or from similar-sounding words that mean "magical creature." Another name given to the creature was *metch-kangmi,* or "repugnant snowman." It is from this moniker that the term *Abominable Snowman* was derived.

Stories about the yeti all agree on the basic facts. It is large and hairy, with a particularly pungent body odor. The yeti is solitary and shy, and it rarely comes into contact with human beings. The occasional traveler or goatherd might encounter huge footprints in the snow or lose a goat from his or her flock under suspicious circumstances, but for the most part the yeti avoids confrontation.

Part of the mystique of the yeti is that the local people believe them to be more than mere animals. According to the Sherpa, a local people best known for guiding Western explorers through the Himalayas, the yeti are supernatural creatures, standing between mankind and the demon-spirits who live on the mountain peaks.

Buddhist religious figures called lamas claim to have relics that came from yeti, including fingers, toes, and skulls, in their lamaseries, or homes. These relics are used to remind Buddhists of their connection to the world around them.

Reported Sightings

The first reporting of a yeti by an outsider was in 1832, when British explorer B.H. Hodson reported an attack on his native guides by creatures he calls *rakshas,* or demons. In 1889, a British soldier, Major L.A. Wadell, reported finding large, bearlike footprints in the snow well above the elevation at which any bear should be living. His guides told him it was a *yeh-tih.*

Over the next fifty years, such reports become more common. But because of the

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combination of extreme weather conditions and awkward political situations in Tibet and Nepal, no scientific expeditions were mounted to determine the truth. The stories grew and spread with every new sighting.

With the development of cameras and other equipment that could withstand the cold, and the easing of political restrictions between Tibet and the West, the rumors proved irresistible. The first modern sighting of the yeti was made in 1951. Explorer Eric Shipton tracked a yeti along the slopes of the Menlung glacier until it disappeared into an ice field. The photographs taken on that trip of huge footprints, the clearest one measuring 12 inches (30 centimeters) long by 6 inches (15 centimeters) wide, are often held up as the best evidence of the existence of the yeti.

A year later, a British newspaper funded the first scientific survey of the yeti, sending trained scientists and cameramen into the mountains with some of the best guides available. They found more tracks, a scalp of coarse hair, and droppings that they claimed came from a yeti. The team was allowed to take one hair from that scalp out of the country, but testing proved inconclusive. Several other expeditions came back with similar evidence, which also was deemed questionable.

In 1956, a Texas oilman and millionaire named Thomas Slick mounted a large, government-backed expedition to Tibet. He and his team had up-to-date scientific equipment, weapons, and trained bloodhounds. They returned with photos, footprint castings, and two fingers of a mummified hand they claimed was that of a yeti. The fingers later disappeared, and the Slick expedition was thrown into doubt by Sir Edmund Hillary (of Everest fame) and Marlin Perkins (later known for the television series *Wild Kingdom*), who did not believe that the yeti existed.

For a short time, the debate raged fiercely in scientific journals. By the 1970s, however, science moved on, and the search for the yeti, like the pursuit of the Loch Ness monster and other unlikely creatures, became the province of fringe scientists and explorers.

Current Theories

In contrast to theories about other such creatures, perhaps because of its potential relationship to humans, theories about the yeti's origin are still popular topics. Some researchers claim that the yeti and its kin around the world are wild men, perhaps direct descendents of the first primates to come out of Africa, which evolved to possess intelligence almost equal to that of humans. Others believe that the yeti is a modern but not yet identified ape, a close relative to the gorilla.

One theory traces the yeti back to the primate *Gigantopithecus*. This giant ape lived during the Pleistocene era, 1.8 million to 10,000 years ago, in the region that is now China and Southeast Asia. *Gigantopithecus* became extinct, but a branch of its family still may survive in the yeti. A related idea suggests that the yeti is descended from our own ancestor, the Neanderthal. Both of these theories fail to account for the fact that *Gigantopithecus* was last seen in the fossil record at 500,000 B.C.E. and the last Neanderthal dates to 40,000 B.C.E.

The most recent explanation, formulated in 1999, suggests that the human family tree is older and has more branches than previously thought. It has been theorized that the yeti is an unidentified branch, a distant cousin of modern *Homo sapiens* that has adapted to the colder climate.

There have been no reputable reports of face-to-face encounters, and the few photos that are believed to exist were taken from too great a distance to provide positive identification. No one has ever captured a live yeti or discovered a skeleton or other remnant that can be conclusively proven to have come from one. So all theories are pure conjecture.

Laura Anne Gilman

See also: Tibetan Storytelling.

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Yggdrasil

(Norse)

Yggdrasil is the Norse name of the World Tree, the cosmic tree that links three realms in Norse mythology. Said to be a gigantic ash tree, its name literally means "Ygg's horse." Ygg, which means "terrible" or "dreadful," is one of the names of the chief Norse god, Odin, who hung from the tree for nine days as a willing self-sacrifice to gain the wisdom of the runes.

Three roots support Yggdrasil's mighty trunk. Each root passes through a different world so that Yggdrasil's branches spread out over all worlds.

In one version of the myth, the three worlds are Asgard, home of the gods; Midgard, home of the humans; and Hel, the underworld. Another version of the myth describes the three roots as passing through Asgard; Jotenheim, the world of the frost giants; and Niflheim, the world of the dwarves.

Yggdrasil was the Norse version of the world tree, a widespread motif representing the center of the world. This intricate carving, which shows Yggdrasil being gnawed on by a deer, can be found on the side of a historic church in Umes, Norway. *(© Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY)*

Beneath one of the roots, usually mentioned in texts as the Asgard root, lies the sacred Urdarbrunnr, the well of fate. It is here that the three Norns, or Nornor, live. These are the three Fates of Norse mythology. The Norns hold the destinies of all that live, and not even the gods have power over them. The Norns water the tree every day to keep its bark white and its leaves green.

Beneath the two other roots lie Mimisbrunnr, the well of wisdom, guarded by the giant Mimir, and the Hvergelmir, or roaring kettle, which is said to be the source of many of the Midgard rivers.

Near the Hvergelmir, the great serpent Nidhogg gnaws at one of Yggdrasil's roots. An eagle sits in Yggdrasil's branches, and between its eyes a falcon perches. The beat of the eagle's powerful wings stirs the Midgard winds. The goat Heidrun lives up there, too, and eats Yggdrasil's leaves, while four stags, Dain, Duneyr, Durathror, and Dvalin, feed on Yggdrasil's bark.

A squirrel, Ratatosk, scurries up and down Yggdrasil's trunk. It carries messages back and forth between the eagle and the serpent Nidhogg.

The myths state that someday, when the final battle of Ragnarok arrives, Nidhogg will finish its gnawing and bring down Yggdrasil. Then Yggdrasil will then expire in flames set by the giants.

See also: Norse Mythology; Odin/Odhinn; World Tree.

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Ymir

(Norse)

In Norse mythology, Ymir is the primordial giant and the progenitor of the race of frost giants.

Ymir was created when there was little else in the world. He was brought forth when ice from Niflheim, realm of eternal cold, was touched by hot air from Muspellheim, realm of eternal fire. The ice began to melt, releasing drops of *eitr* (ether, a substance once believed to be the essence of life). The drops slowly congealed and became the giant's body. The fires of Muspellheim sparked him to life.

But Ymir merely slept. From Ymir's sleeping body came the first giants, creeping out from his legs and from under his arms.

The frost slowly melted. From the drops that fell and congealed, the huge, primal cow, Audhumla, came into being. From her vast udder flowed four rivers of milk, on which Ymir fed whenever he woke. The cow, in turn, got her nourishment by licking hoarfrost and salt from the eternal ice.

On the evening of the first day, as Audhumla licked the ice, the hair of a man appeared. On the second day, the whole head was freed. On the third day, a figure rose up. This was Buri, the first god. From his line came three grandsons, Odin, Ve, and Vili.

There was no world yet, nor a heaven. There was only the ice, Ymir, and his ever-growing number of frost-giant offspring. Odin, Ve, and Vili disliked Ymir and hated the giants. They killed Ymir, and all but two of the giants drowned in the rivers of blood that flowed from Ymir's body. From these two who remained, all other giants descended.

From Ymir's body, the brother gods created the world. Ymir's flesh became the land, and his blood became the rivers, lakes, and oceans. His bones became the mountains, and his teeth the rocks and stones. His hair became the trees and all other plant life, and his brain became the clouds. The maggots that crawled in Ymir's carcass became the race of dwarves. Ymir's skull became the overturned bowl of the sky, which was forever held aloft by four dwarves (the four directions).

In astronomy, Ymir is the name of one of the planet Saturn's moons, a fitting name for an icy moon.

See also: Giants; Norse Mythology.

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Yoruban Storytelling

(West African)

The Yoruba people of Nigeria and neighboring Benin in West Africa are primarily farmers who also have a fine tradition of woodcraft and metalworking.

Yoruban stories and histories are primarily passed down orally from generation to generation. Storytelling is still a favorite activity among the Yoruba people, but in the twenty-first century it competes with television and written works, including works by Yoruban authors.

Storytelling in the Yoruban style is a very active art. It involves taking on the voices and personas of the various characters, as well as performing music and dancing. The audience also takes an active role in the story. Listeners are expected to get involved by beating drums or singing along.

Storytelling sessions generally occur after the evening meal. Yoruban folktales always begin with a call-and-response chorus called the *alo* chorus (*alo* means riddle). One of the young men will begin by asking the other

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young men two or three riddles to determine whether everyone in the group is awake and alert. Then, the tale begins.

The types of stories are similar to those found in other cultures, such as myths, legends, fables, poetry, family or society histories, and folktales. Hero tales, how-and-why tales (also known as *pourquoi* tales), and trickster tales are also popular. Tortoise and Ananse the Spider are the major trickster figures in West African folktales.

Yoruban stories often center on the theme of fertility to a greater degree than is usually found in world folktales. This is due, in part, to a high infant mortality rate in the region.

See also: West African Mythology.

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Yoshitsune

(Japanese)

The historical samurai Yoshitsune (1159–1189 C.E.) was a son of Minamoto Yoshitomo (1123–1160). When Minamoto was assassinated by a rival samurai, Taira Kiyomori, Minamoto's wife and their children were found and brought to Kiyomori, who spared them. Yoritomo, the second eldest, was sent off to Izu, while Yoshitsune was sent to a temple on Kuramayama, north of Kyoto.

Little is know about Yoshitsune's boyhood, but Japanese storytellers have assigned a series of fantastic adventures to him. He was said to have escaped into the woods to be instructed in all the martial arts by the king of the Tengu demons. When Yoshitsune returned to the world of men, he single-handedly exterminated the entire Taira clan.

The factual battles, of course, were less romantic and more complicated, although Yoshitsune did avenge his father and become a famous samurai. The stories of Yoshitsune, which are part history and part legend, are good examples of the folklore that can be spun from true stories of historical figures.

See also: Culture Heroes.

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Ys/Ker-Ys

(Breton/French)

In French and Breton folklore, Ys, also known as Ker-Ys, was said to be a great and powerful city. It lay below sea level on the Breton coast and was guarded by a series of seawalls. Ys was ruled by King Gradlon and was eventually submerged in a flood.

The folklore tells that the king was a mighty sea warrior before the city was created. King Gradlon and Malgven, queen of the North, slew Malgven's husband and escaped on a magical horse that could gallop over the waves. From the union of Gradlon and Malgven came a daughter, Dahut. Malgven died during childbirth.

Dahut asked her father to build Ys near the water. Gradlon agreed, and the city was built. Since it was below sea level, Ys was surrounded by a high wall and powerful sluice gates. Only King Gradlon held the key to these gates.

Ys soon became a prosperous city. This may have been because Dahut, who had grown into a beautiful woman, sang to the sea. She called herself its betrothed and promised herself to the sea if it brought ships and handsome fishermen to Ys. The city was rich and lively, but its inhabitants had many vices.

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Dahut was among the sinners. She stole the keys to the sluice gates and gave them to her treacherous lover. He opened the gates and destroyed the glittering city of Ys. According to folk belief, if the weather is very still, the bells of Ys can be heard ringing far under the waves.

Another folk belief claims that the name Paris actually means "Par Ys" in Breton, or "Like Ys." Two proverbs speak of the two cities. The first proverb says, "Since the city of Ys was drowned, no equal in Paris has been found." The second proverb predicts that "When Paris is engulfed by the sea, then from the sea Ys returned will be."

It is unlikely, however, that Ys will ever rise again, even if Paris were to be engulfed by the sea.

See also: Sunken Cities.

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Zeus

(Greek)

In Greek mythology, Zeus was the supreme ruler of Mount Olympus and of the pantheon of gods who resided there. He upheld law, justice, and morals.

The Titans, an ancient race of giants, were ruled by Cronos. It was foretold that one of Cronos's sons would dethrone him. In an attempt to prevent this, Cronos swallowed his children at birth.

Before Cronos could swallow his last child, his wife, Rhea, fled to a cave on the Isle of Crete. She secretly gave birth to Zeus and left him to be raised by nymphs. When Rhea returned to Cronos, she gave him a disguised stone to swallow in place of the last child.

Zeus Gains Control

When Zeus was grown, he asked the goddess Metis for help against his father. She gave Cronos a drug that made him disgorge all the children he had swallowed.

Zeus was able to overthrow Cronos and the rest of the Titans with the help of his brothers and sisters—Demeter, Hades, Hera, Hestia, and Poseidon. Zeus became the ruler of heaven and banished the Titans to Tartarus, the lowest level of existence, below the underworld.

Once Zeus had control, he and his siblings divided the universe among them: Zeus took the heavens, Poseidon took the sea, and Hades claimed the underworld. Demeter took fertility, Hera took marriage, and Hestia claimed the home and hearth.

Not long after he took the throne of the heavens, Zeus had to defend it. Three separate attacks were mounted from among the offspring of Gaia, the living earth. First were the Gigantes, which were giants, as their name implies; then came the monstrous Typhon; and finally the giant twin brothers called the Aloadae attacked. As he had done with the Titans, Zeus banished them all to Tartarus.

The Unfaithful Zeus

Zeus's first marriage, or in some versions, his first love affair, was with Metis. The prophecy that a son would eventually overthrow Zeus led him to swallow both Metis and her unborn child. The child, Athena, was released from Zeus's head.

Zeus's next wife was his sister Hera. Their children were Ares, Eileithyia, Hebe, and Hephaestus. But Zeus was rarely faithful to his wife. He had many affairs, with both gods and mortals.

By Leto, Zeus fathered the divine twins Apollo and Artemis. Zeus took the shape of a swan to seduce the Spartan queen Leda. From

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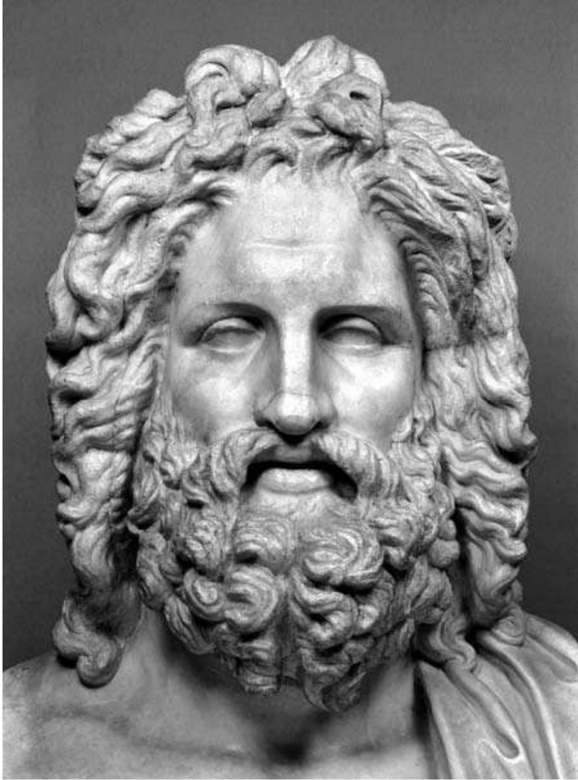

A Hellenic Greek statue of Zeus from the first century B.C.E. The chief god is portrayed as a wise, noble figure, a characterization he did not always live up to in myths. *(Scala/Art Resource, NY)*

the egg that Leda produced came two sets of twins, Castor and Polydeuces and Clytemnestra and Helen of Troy.

Disguised as a bull, Zeus carried off the Phoenician princess Europa to the island of Crete, where she bore three sons: Minos, Rhadamanthys, and Sarpedon. He visited Princess Danae as a shower of gold, and from this union came the hero Perseus.

Zeus also took as a lover the young Trojan prince Ganymede. The prince was carried up to Mount Olympus by an eagle, where he became Zeus's cupbearer.

When Zeus wanted to seduce the mortal Semele, she insisted on seeing Zeus in all his glory. He agreed. Their union produced Dionysus, but the sight of Zeus in all of his splendor, too much for any mortal, destroyed Semele.

The two sides of Zeus—heroic leader of the gods and philanderer—make him a most unusual deity. In many ways, Zeus seems more human than divine.

Shanti Fader

See also: An/Anu; Hera; Odin/Odhinn; Sius; Wele.

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Ziusudra

(Sumerian)

Ziusudra, whose name means "life of distant days," is the epic hero in the Sumerian version of the flood myth.

In a later Akkadian poem about the creation of humankind, he is called Atra-hasis (exceedingly wise). In the *Epic of Gilgamesh,* Ziusudra is known as Uta-napishti, which means "I found life." The story of Noah in the biblical version of the flood myth contains many similarities to stories about Ziusudra.

In a Sumerian composition called *The Instructions of Shuruppak,* a wise mythological father named Shuruppak, son of Ubar-Tutu, described a Sumerian view of proper conduct to his son, Ziusudra. According to another composition, known as the Sumerian king list, Ubar-Tutu was ruler of the city of Shuruppak, which was the scene of the great flood.

The story of Ziusudra and his father is set in days long past. Shuruppak gave Ziusudra instructions that defined the ideals of proper duty and conduct for a respected landowning citizen of Sumer. Shuruppak's precepts contained proverbs regarding daily life and rules that were presented in an absolute, imperative manner—"do not steal," "do not break into a house," and "do not murder" were some of his directives.

The text described a society in which the canny individual maintained a low profile.

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Self-restraint and levelheadedness were right, and hotheadedness, arrogance, impulsive action, and laziness were wrong. Shuruppak warned, "My son, do not sit [alone] in a chamber with someone's wife." On the subject of violence, he said, "Do not throw down a man," and "Do not commit rape upon a man's daughter."

Shuruppak also explained to Ziusudra that one should strive to make rational decisions, pay attention to the words of one's king, abide by the law, and listen to one's parents. A wise individual also should not be fooled by appearances. A man should not choose a wife at a festival, but should seek lasting values rather than superficial qualities that a woman might affect in public. Finally, one should always worship the gods, for "words of prayer bring abundance."

Much of the story of Ziusudra as hero has been lost. This text of advice that was given to him by his father may be the advice that made Ziusudra a hero.

Ira Spar

See also: Culture Heroes; Flood, The.

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Zmeys and Zmeyitsas

(Bulgarian)

The Bulgarian *zmey,* or dragon, is part snake, part bird, and part human. Usually portrayed as a benign creature, it guarded the fertility of the land and had the ability to change into human form. As a human the zmey could walk among people unrecognized, except by the pure in heart. With serpentine body, legs, wings, a tail, and a human face, the zmey lived in caves, lakes, or mountain palaces and glowed as it flew.

Each village had its own guardian zmey, which fought against the evil forces that caused drought and hail. The ferocity of these battles gave rise to thunderstorms and lightning, a belief that was linked with the mythology of the Slavic thunder god, Perun, and his Christian successor, Saint Ilya.

Zmeys were able to summon whirlwinds or become invisible at will. They were shapeshifters that could take on different forms, from alluring humans to dogs, flower garlands, or even necklaces. *Zmeyitsas,* the females of the species, could shape-shift into bears. Conversely, humans could become zmeys, either through magic or by taking certain herbs.

Zmeys often fell in love with humans, who might then grow pale and sicken. The only way to repulse an unwanted dragon suitor was to take a potion brewed with special herbs such as gentian, tansy, or wormwood.

Zmeys were attracted by music and sometimes seduced maidens with the beauty of their playing on the *kaval,* a kind of flute. They might trick a vain or arrogant maiden and carry her off.

If humans married zmeys, their offspring looked human except for wings growing under their arms. When such a child was born, twelve maidens were called, and under oaths of silence and secrecy, they wove a shirt for the child to hide its wings. The dragon-child could then safely enter the human world, and no one except for the pure of heart would know the child's true nature.

Zmeys should not be confused with their evil relatives, the *lamias,* although zmeyitsas sometimes bear this name.

See also: Dragons.

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Zulu Mythology

In the Zulu religion, the world of the gods can be contacted only by first invoking the ancestors through a diviner, an important person in daily affairs. All bad things are believed to be the result of offended spirit beings or sorcery.

Cleanliness is paramount in Zulu belief. All people are expected to bathe at least once a day and sometimes two or three times. The rules about cleanliness apply to meals as well, as separate dishes are used for separate foods.

Ukqili, "the wise one," is the chief god of the Zulu pantheon. He controls the lightning. When lightning strikes a cow, it is assumed that Ukqili is hungry, and the dead animal becomes a sacrifice. Umvelinqangi is the all-present Zulu creator god, who manifests himself as thunder and earthquakes. He created the primeval reeds from which the supreme god Unkulunkulu emerged. Unkulunkulu, which means "ancestor," is the primary creator god. He grew on a reed in the mythical swamp of Uthlanga.

Three other major deities are Inkosazana, a goddess who makes the crops grow and is venerated in springtime; Mamlambo, who is the mother goddess and goddess of rivers; and Mbaba Mwana Waresa, the goddess of rain and the rainbow, agriculture, and the harvest. It is she who gave humans the gift of beer.

The Amadlozi are the ancestors of the Zulus. Humans can invoke the help of the spirit world by calling upon them. Other ancestral spirits are the *imilozi,* or whistlers, who whistle as they speak.

There are also dangerous supernatural beings that are hostile to humans. Tikdoshe is a malevolent dwarf with only one arm, one leg, and one side. He takes delight in fighting humans. Those whom Tikdoshe defeats die, but those who defeat him are rewarded with magic. The Tokelosh is a small but deadly creature that will strangle any human who sleeps on the ground. Another mythical, malevolent dwarf is Uhlakanyana.

Finally, there is Unwaba. This mythical chameleon was sent to tell the people that they had eternal life. Because the creature was so slow, humans and other species became mortal after all.

See also: Abatwa.

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Zwarte Madam

(Flemish)

The Zwarte Madam is a supernatural and presumably immortal witch being from Flemish folktales.

The word *zwarte* means "black," and *madam* is a courtesy title, so in strict English translation, the Zwarte Madam is the Black Lady. Black refers to her deeds and allegiance, not her appearance. No matter how she is described in the various Flemish folktales, she is always an evil being who works in the service of the devil to help collect mortal souls. But she does not always work actively to corrupt mortals. The Zwarte Madam sometimes appears beside those who are already doomed to hell, presumably as a sort of advance warning.

Fortunately the Zwarte Madam can be warded off with prayer, the utterance of sacred names, or the sign of the cross.

Since good and evil generally balance each other out in folklore, some folk traditions say that there is a direct opposite to the Zwarte Madam, a good figure known

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as de Witte Madam or the White Lady. The latter character plays only a small role in folktales and does not seem to be an active participant in the saving or protecting of souls.

See also: Black Magic.

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Retellings

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The Ramayana

A Great Mythic Epic from India

The *Ramayana,* loosely translated as "the travels of Rama," is the story of King Rama, avatar of the god Vishnu, and his wife, Sita, who is an avatar of the goddess Lakshmi. Originally written in Sanskrit, and dated somewhere between 500 B.C.E. and 100 B.C.E., it is one of the two great epics of India (the other is the *Mahabharata*). The *Ramayana* can be read as a tale of loyalty, fidelity, and high adventure, but it is also a sacred story to the Hindu people.

One theme that should be familiar to readers of Homer's *Odyssey* is the bow that no one but the hero can draw. In the *Ramayana,* the hero is Rama, while in the *Odyssey*, the hero is Odysseus.

The *Ramayana* was loved and praised by all. It is said, "Men who listen to the *Ramayana* will live a long life. They will be free of sins and will have many sons. Women who listen to the *Ramayana* will be blessed with children like Rama and his brothers. May all who recite it or listen to it regularly find increased love, wisdom, and strength."

In long-past days, the lovely city of Ayodhya, capital of Kosala, stood on the banks of the Sarayu River. The city was filled with wondrous palaces gleaming with gems, and temple spires rose into the sky. Around the city stood a great moat, and within the city, the people of Ayodhya were happy and peaceful.

Only King Dasaratha was not happy. An old man, he had no son to inherit his throne. He told his priest Vasistha, "I long for a son."

The priest knew as well as his king that there must be an heir. "King Dasaratha, you will have sons. I shall perform a sacred rite to please the gods."

Excited by this wonderful news, the king ran to his three wives, Sumitra, Kaikeyi, and Kausalya. "I will have sons!"

Meanwhile, the gods were growing more and more angry with Ravana, king of the *rakshasas,* the demons. Ten-headed, twenty-armed Ravana had great power. But he used that power to keep gods and holy men alike from their sacred rituals. Yet Ravana had been granted a boon by the gods. Thanks to it, he could not be harmed by gods or demons.

The god Vishnu, protector of the universe, thought, "Arrogant Ravana protected himself only from those beings who he thought could hurt him. He failed to protect himself from humans."

So Vishnu made the decision to be born as a human, someone who could kill Ravana. He sent a messenger to King Dasaratha with a special drink.

The messenger told the king, "Give each of your three wives this drink. It will bring sons." Then, the messenger disappeared.

The king gave the drink to each of his wives. Soon the city was filled with great rejoicing when the king announced the birth of four sons. They were named Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata, and Satrughna. Almost from birth, it became clear that Rama and Lakshmana were inseparable friends. People said that it was as if the two were one life in two bodies.

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All four sons grew to be wise, kind men. King Dasaratha was finally happy, watching his sons grow. Though he never said it, his favorite son was Rama.

One day, the sage Vishwamitra, whom Dasaratha greatly respected, came to Ayodhya to see the king. "Greetings, oh, wise one," King Dasaratha said. "What brings you to my kingdom?"

"I must ask you for a favor. I have been trying to perform an important sacred rite—yet again and again it has been interrupted by Ravana's demons. My vows prevent me from fighting them."

"How can I help?" the king asked. "Nothing is too great to ask."

"Let me take Rama with me to protect my sacred site."

"But he is only a child, barely sixteen! Let me send you my armies instead. I will lead them into battle myself! Only, do not take my son!" The king began to weep.

Vishwamitra understood the king's pain. But he had no choice. He knew, as the king could not, that Rama was an avatar of Vishnu. Only Vishnu in human form could kill Ravana.

So it was that Rama went with Vishwamitra, and Lakshmana went as well. The two young men followed the sage along the bank of the Sarayu River. Whenever they stopped to rest, the sage taught them how to use their weapons.

They came to a dark and terrible forest, twisted and full of thorns. The sage said, "This was once a beautiful and prosperous land. Now, the terrible she-demon, Tataka, lives here. She attacks and kills anyone who enters."

"We are not afraid," Rama said.

"Excellent. You and your brother must rid the forest of this demon and her underlings. If you can do so, you also will restore the land to peace and beauty."

Rama and Lakshmana followed Vishwamitra into the forest. Each step took them farther into the darkness. They heard eerie howls and weird groans but saw no one.

Then, just as they stepped into a clearing, a huge rock suddenly came hurtling down out of the sky, straight at Rama. He fit an arrow to his bow and fired, splitting the rock in half. The pieces crashed harmlessly into the trees.

But then the huge and hideous demon Tataka sprang into sight. Her eyes were fire and her hands were claws. Before Tataka could attack, Lakshmana loosed an arrow from his bow. He missed a killing shot. But Rama did not. His arrow pierced Tataka's heart, and she fell dead. Lotus blossoms rained down upon Rama, blessings from the gods.

The three men continued through the forest, killing the rest of the forest demons. The land was cleansed.

But the sage knew that it was one thing to kill forest demons, and another to kill the demon king Ravana himself.

He led Rama and Lakshmana to Mithila to visit King Janaka. The king told them the story of his daughter.

"Years back, I found a child in a plowed furrow. I named her Sita, and raised her as my own daughter. Now, she is a beautiful young woman with many royal suitors. But he who wishes to wed Sita must lift and string the ancient bow of Shiva. So far, no man has been able just to lift the bow."

"I will do it," Rama said.

He easily took the bow from its case and started to string it. As he did so, the bow snapped in half. The king exclaimed, "Sita has found her husband! Let a messenger be sent to Ayodhya: Rama is to wed my daughter, Sita."

King Janaka led Sita to Rama. He placed her hand in his and said to Rama, "Sita, my daughter, is from today your partner in life."

Rama and Sita looked at each other and were overjoyed. Following the wedding, they returned to Ayodhya, and everyone in the city cheered their arrival. In the days that followed, Rama and Sita were the perfect husband and wife, utterly devoted to each other.

As the years passed, Rama grew into an excellent young man, learned and kind, following the will of the gods. But his father, King Dasaratha, grew older, and knew that his

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end was near. "I must be sure that my throne goes to my worthiest son, Rama. I shall step down to have the blessing of seeing him as king before I die."

But the youngest of the king's three wives, Kaikeyi, went to him and said, "Do you remember the day I saved your life? Do you remember how I stopped your runaway chariot?"

"Yes," replied the king.

"And do you remember what you said that day? You promised me two boons. Hear them now, I pray you. First, I wish to have my son, Bharata, placed upon the throne of Ayodhya. Second, I wish to see Rama banished from the kingdom for no less than fourteen years."

The king cried out in horror and fell to his knees. "I beg you not to hold me to these things."

But Kaikeyi showed no mercy. She told Rama that he must go into exile. Rama did not argue, but said to the king, "Father, your word is law. I shall do whatever you bid."

Lakshmana exclaimed, "I shall stop any who oppose your right to the throne!"

"No," Rama said. "You know it is my dharma, my sacred duty, to obey."

"Then I shall follow you!"

Sita, sobbing, added, "And it is my dharma to be at your side, my husband. How could I live without you?"

So the three left together, wearing the clothes not of royalty but of hermits. The people wept as they left, and Dasaratha cried, "Rama! Rama! Do not leave me!"

The king's heart failed within him, and soon after, he died.

Meanwhile, Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita hunted for a land where they could live alone and safe. They built a small hut near a stream.

But then Lakshmana, hunting in the forest, heard hoofbeats and climbed a tree to see who was approaching. To his shock, it was an army from Ayodhya. Bharata had found his brothers. Lakshmana was sure that his brother had come to kill them.

But Bharata embraced his brothers, crying, "My heart is filled with grief and shame. Grief for the loss of our noble father. Shame for being given the throne that should be yours. Come back to Ayodhya and be our king."

"I gave my word," Rama said. "I must stay in exile for fourteen years. Only after that time will I return."

"As long as you are in exile," Bharata stated, "there shall be no king. Give me your sandals and I shall place them on the throne. For the next fourteen years, I will rule in your name. And if you do not return after those fourteen years, I shall die."

Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita traveled on until they finally reached a clearing in a lush forest, sweet with the perfume of flowers and with fruit on every vine. All around them, birds sang joyfully.

"Let us build our home here," Rama said.

The ancient vulture king Jatayu lived nearby. They and he became friends, and Jatayu guarded Sita while the brothers hunted.

Just beyond the clearing lived Shurpanakha the she-demon, Ravana's sister. She had a potbelly, huge ears, clawed fingers and toes, narrow eyes, and long tangles of dirty hair. One day, she saw Rama in the forest. Putting down the bone she was gnawing, she said, "I want him for my husband."

Turning herself into a beautiful maiden, she went to see Rama. "Why does such a strong, handsome man like you live in this forest?"

But when she saw Sita, Shurpanakha frowned. "That woman is not good enough for you. I can make you happy."

When Rama refused her, the demon lost her temper. Returning to demon form, she lunged at Sita. Lakshmana grabbed Shurpanakha and cut off her nose and ears.

Shurpanakha fled, howling in pain, straight to her demon brothers, Khar and Dushan. When they learned that a human had dared to wound her, they cried, "Take us to him. We will kill him!"

"Look!" Lakshmana cried. "The sky is growing dark—with flying demons!"

Rama and Lakshmana fought side by side, firing arrow after arrow skyward. With every arrow, a demon fell dead.

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Shurpanakha watched in horror as her brothers and their army were destroyed. She hurried to see Ravana. "Oh, Ravana. Khar, Dushan, and all their warriors have been killed by the two banished princes from Ayodhya!"

Ravana sprang to his feet, staring at his disfigured sister with the eyes of all ten heads. "Those two!"

"Wait, brother. There is one more thing. Rama's wife, Sita, is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. She would make you a lovely queen."

"So be it!" Ravana cried. "I shall avenge you and our brothers in a way that Rama shall never expect."

The next day, a beautiful deer stepped out of the forest. Sita was enchanted by it.

"Please capture it for me," Sita asked Rama.

Lakshmana said, "No natural deer can be so perfect. Brother, be wary."

"Stay with Sita," Rama said, and set out after the deer. It led him deep into the forest, and then turned into a magician and vanished. "Lakshmana was right," Rama cried, and he ran back toward the hut.

Meanwhile, Sita and Lakshmana heard Rama's voice calling for help. "Lakshmana," Sita gasped, "you must help him!"

Lakshmana drew a magic circle around the hut. "Stay inside, and you will be safe," he said; then he grabbed his bow and quiver and ran after the sound of Rama's voice.

Hidden behind a tree, Ravana stood watching. As soon as Lakshmana was gone, the demon king turned into a *sannyasi,* an old wise man, and approached the hut, clutching a begging bowl. Sita kindly offered the poor man some food. "Please, take this offering," she said.

But Ravana could not cross the magic circle. "As a sannyasi, I cannot enter your house. I cannot accept your offering, I fear."

Sita took a step forward. One foot crossed over the magic circle. Ravana changed back to his demon form and snatched Sita. She screamed, but Ravana's magic chariot soared up into the sky and off to his kingdom.

The old vulture king Jatayu saw this and flew after them. He tore off a railing from the chariot, caught Sita, and set her safely on the ground, then turned to fight Ravana, tearing off arms and heads—but they at once grew back. Jatayu fell back, weary, and Ravana cut off both his wings. Sita had just time enough to bless the dying bird before Ravana dragged her back into his chariot and sped away.

Once he had Sita safely in his palace, Ravana did his best to woo her, begging her to be his queen. But Sita refused to listen, telling the demon king that she loved only Rama.

Ravana set Sita in a palace garden guarded by a hundred demons.

Back at the hut, Rama and Lakshmana were horrified to realize how they had been tricked. Rama cried, "I will slay Ravana and all his kin!"

In their search for Sita, Rama and Lakshmana entered Kiskindha, the kingdom of the monkeys. They met the monkey king Sugriva and told him their story.

Sugriva said, "I, too, am in exile. My brother seized my kingdom. Help me regain my throne, and I will help you find your wife." He added, "One of my people saw Sita being carried off. As she passed overhead, she dropped this."

It was one of Sita's ornaments. Rama took it, and tears filled his eyes.

Rama and Lakshmana defeated Sugriva's brother and won back the monkey king's throne. The monkey warrior Hanuman arrived, together with a great monkey army. Hanuman divided his troops into four divisions, with the plan that each division would go in search of Sita for one month.

At the end of the month, three of the four divisions returned with no word of Sita's whereabouts. Only Hanuman's division had yet to return.

As Hanuman and his men searched for Sita, they came to a mighty ocean. Hanuman prayed for help, and grew miraculously large. Crying "Victory to Rama," he leaped up and flew across the ocean to Ravana's palace.

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As he landed, Hanuman returned to his normal size. He searched all through the palace. Then he saw a grove of trees. Beneath one tree, surrounded by she-demon guards, sat the loveliest of women, sobbing, "Rama, Rama."

"I have found Sita!" Hanuman cried.

But before he could speak to her, Hanuman saw Ravana coming, and hid. Ravana pleaded with Sita, "Come with me. Be my queen. You will have everything you wish."

"You have kidnapped me!" Sita replied. "Rama will come to rescue me—and he will kill you!"

Ravana stormed away. Hanuman waited until the she-demon guards fell asleep, then crept to Sita's side and knelt before her. "Do not be afraid. I am Hanuman, Rama's messenger. He has sent me to find you, and weeps for your return." To show that he was not a demon in disguise, Hanuman gave Sita a ring from Rama. "This will prove that Rama sent me."

Sita cried, "Go tell Rama where I am. Give this jewel to my lord as proof of my love."

The demon guards awoke, but Hanuman slew them with ease. More guards rushed in, and at last Hanuman was taken before Ravana. "Set his tail on fire," Ravana ordered. "Let him return home that way."

As the king's men wrapped Hanuman's tail in cloth to set it on fire, he grew it longer and longer. The more they wrapped, the longer Hanuman grew his tail. Finally, Ravana grew impatient. "Set it on fire!"

Hanuman leaped up into the air with his long tail on fire. He flew low over the city, trailing that fiery tail, and set each building, temple, palace, and garden on fire. As he flew over the garden, he made sure that Sita was safe. Then, before he headed home, he dunked his tail in the ocean to put out the fire.

Hanuman and his troops rushed back to tell Rama the good news. By now, Rama had given up all hope of ever seeing Sita alive again. Without saying a word, Hanuman gave Rama Sita's jewel. Rama cried, "You have given me reason to live again."

Meanwhile, back at Ravana's palace, his decent brother, Vibhishana, tried his best to get Ravana to let Sita go, to save both her life and Ravana's kingdom. But Ravana would not listen. At last, Vibhishana flew away to Rama.

"I am Vibhishana, brother to Ravana. No matter what I say to him, he still refuses to release Sita. Now, I wish to join you and fight at your side."

Rama replied, "Welcome, Vibhishana. You have rejected evil for good. For your honesty, you shall become the new king in Ravana's place."

Rama stood on the shoreline of the great ocean. "Hear me!" he called to the ocean god. "I am Rama. My weapons are beyond imagination. In an instant, I can dry your ocean. If you wish to avoid this fate, show me how to reach Lanka."

The ocean said, "Rama, here is Nala, son of the great builder. He will build you a bridge across these waters. I shall support that bridge."

With the help of the monkey army, Nala put up a bridge made of wood, rocks, and stones. Rama, Hanuman, and the monkey army crossed the bridge by nightfall, and surrounded Ravana's city.

Ravana ordered one of his demons, "Make me an exact copy of Rama's head. Soak it in blood. Then bring it to me." He took the head to Sita. "O, Sita, Rama has failed in his attempt to rescue you. His army has been destroyed. Here is the end of your hope."

Sita collapsed in tears. "Alas, O Rama, you have followed your dharma. But I am left alone. You came to save me, but you gave your own life.

"O Rama, you are happy now. You have rejoined your beloved father in heaven. But what shall I do?

"O Rama, I am she who brought all this upon you. Take me too. Take me with you, my love."

Angered by Sita's devotion, Ravana stormed from the garden and ordered all his troops to march toward the city gates.

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The great battle began, and soon bodies littered the city and the land outside the walls. Indrajit, Ravana's son, rained poison arrows upon Rama and Lakshmana. So overwhelming was this attack that the two brothers fell to the ground, unconscious.

Meanwhile, Ravana's demons made themselves invisible and attacked the monkey army.

But Hanuman charged forward, smashing the skull of every enemy he could still see. The monkey army rallied behind him and fought more fiercely than before.

Rama and Lakshmana struggled back to consciousness and returned to the battle. Ravana, high over the battle in his magic chariot, shot an arrow that hit Lakshmana. Hanuman rushed to his side and carried him to safety.

By now, things were looking bad for Rama and his forces. Most of the monkeys were dead or wounded. But Hanuman raced off to Kailasa Mountain, where a healing herb grew, and returned in giant form, balancing the mountain in his arms. All the wounded warriors, including Lakshmana, were healed as soon as they inhaled the aroma of the magical herbs.

Rama, Lakshmana, Vibhishana, and Hanuman overpowered Indrajit, Ravana's son, and killed him. But Ravana could not be taken. The battle raged for two days, and at last Rama felt his strength leaving him.

But one of the sages with his army said, "Pray to the Sun, O Rama. It is the heart of the Sun that will bring you victory."

Rama knelt to pray to the Sun, and felt his strength return.

Ravana attacked again, charging forward. Rama stood quietly, and reached for his most powerful weapon, the Brahma-missile, to be used only when all else had failed. As he did so, the earth shook. All the warriors covered their eyes and fell to the ground.

Rama fired. The missile struck Ravana's chest, and Ravana fell dead.

"Victory to Rama!" Rama's men shouted.

Vibhishana knelt at the body of his dead brother and burst into tears. "Why didn't you listen to me? Why were you so overcome with Sita and power?"

Following the funeral rites for Ravana, Rama made Vibhishana the new king.

Vibhishana's wife and maidens took Sita from the garden. She wore a beautiful sari sparkling with jewels. Rama and Sita were reunited and returned to Ayodhya.

But once they were back in Ayodhya, Rama grew troubled. Many people in the city were expressing their doubts about Sita's faithfulness while she had been in Ravana's hands. Even his lowest subjects whispered, "How can Rama forget that Sita was with another man?"

Sorrowing, Rama knew that a king must be above reproach. He ordered that Sita be sent back to the forest.

Sita stood alone on a riverbank. She heard the whisper of the river's goddess saying, "Let life go, Sita. Come home. Dive into me."

But an old man said, "Do not enter the river."

"Who are you?" Sita asked.

"I am Valmiki, a poet and a hermit. I live in this forest. You are welcome to make my home yours."

It was there that Sita gave birth to Rama's twins sons, Kusa and Lava. For the next twelve years, she and her sons lived peacefully with Valmiki. During that time, Valmiki composed a poem he named the *Ramayana,* and taught it to the boys.

In Ayodhya, King Rama held a great public festival. Kusa and Lava came to Ayodhya to perform. Rama heard the boys and asked, "What is this beautiful poem called?"

The boys said, "The *Ramayana*."

Rama stared at the twins. "These are my sons!" he exclaimed.

He hastily sent a messenger to find Sita and convince her to return to Ayodhya.

The next day, Sita returned. Quietly she said, "I will prove my innocence before you once and for all."

Then Sita took a step back and said, "Mother Earth, if I have been faithful to my husband, take me home."

With a roar, the ground opened and took Sita back, then closed once more.

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Rama lived on, ruling Ayodhya alone, for a thousand years. One day, he thought, "I was born of the god Vishnu, and it is time for me to return to him."

He left the palace and the crowded streets. He walked to the banks of the Sarayu River. There, Brahma, the creator of all, appeared to him. "Come, O Vishnu, return to Vishnu. Return to heaven."

Hearing Brahma's words, Rama smiled and stepped into the river and returned to heaven. Rama was home.

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Shah-nameh

Iran's Greatest Epic

Known as the greatest epic of Iran, formerly Persia, the *Shah-nameh* was written by the poet Ferdowsi in the eleventh century. It is full of adventure, magic, and heroic deeds, beginning with the world of myth and continuing into folklore, that make it an ideal work for storytellers to read and learn.

Kaiumers was the first king of Persia, and, against him, Ahriman the evil, jealous of his greatness, sent forth a mighty daeva (a devil or evil djinn) to conquer him. By this daeva, Saiamuk, the son of Kaiumers, was slain, and the king himself died of grief at the loss of his son.

Husheng, his grandson, succeeded Kaiumers and was a great and wise king who gave fire to his people, taught them irrigation, instructed them how to till and sow, and gave names to the beasts. Husheng's son and successor, Tahumers, taught his people the arts of spinning, weaving, and writing, and when he died he left his throne to his son, Jemschid.

Jemschid was a mighty monarch who divided men into classes, and the years into periods, and he built mighty walls and cities. But his heart grew proud at the thought of his power, and he was driven away from his land by his people, who called Zohak to the throne of Iran.

Zohak, who came from the deserts of Arabia, was a good and wise young man who had fallen into the power of a daeva. This daeva, in the guise of a skillful servant, asked permission one day to kiss his monarch between the shoulders as a reward for an unusually fine bit of cookery. From the spot he kissed sprang two black serpents, whose only nourishment was the brains of the king's subjects.

The serpent king, as Zohak was now called, was much feared by his subjects, who saw their numbers lessen daily by the demands of the serpents. But when the children of the blacksmith Kawah were demanded as food for the serpents, the blacksmith defied Zohak. He raised his leathern apron as a standard—a banner ever since honored in Persia—and called the people to him to set off in search of Feridoun, an heir of Jemschid. Under the young leader, the oppressed people defeated the tyrant, and they placed Feridoun on the throne.

Feridoun had three sons, Irij, Tur, and Silim. Having tested their bravery, he divided the kingdom among them, giving to Irij the kingdom of Iran. Although the other brothers received equal shares of the kingdom, they were enraged, because Iran was not their portion. When their complaints to their father were not heeded, they slew their brother.

Irij left a son, a babe named Minuchihr, who was reared carefully by Feridoun. In time, Minuchihr avenged his father by defeating the armies of his uncles and slaying them both. Soon after this, Feridoun died, entrusting his grandson to Saum, his favorite *pehliva,* or vassal, who ruled over Seistan.

Saum was a childless monarch. When at last a son was born to him, he was very happy, until he learned that while the child was perfect in every other way, he had the silver hair of an old man. Fearing the talk of his enemies, Saum exposed the child, Zal, on a mountaintop to die. There, the child was found by the simurgh, a remarkable animal, part bird, part human, that was touched by the cries of the helpless infant. She carried him to her great

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nest of aloe and sandalwood, and reared him with her little ones.

Saum, who had lived to regret his foolish and wicked act, was told in a dream that his son still lived and was being cared for by the simurgh. He accordingly sought the nest, and carried his son away with great thanksgiving. The simurgh parted tenderly with the little Zal, and presented him with a feather from her wing, telling him that whenever he was in danger, he had only to throw it on the fire, and she would instantly come to his aid.

Saum first presented his son at the court of Minuchihr, and then took him home to Zaboulistan, where he was carefully instructed in every art and science.

At one time, while his father was invading a neighboring province, Zal traveled over the kingdom and stopped at the court of Mihrab, a tributary of Saum, who ruled at Kabul. Though a descendant of the serpent king, Mihrab was good, just, and wise, and he received the young warrior with hospitality.

Zal had not been long in Kabul before he heard of the beauty of Rudabeh, the daughter of Mihrab, and she, in turn, of the great exploits of Zal. By an artifice of the princess, they met and vowed to love each other forever, though they knew their love would meet with opposition. Saum and Zal both pleaded Zal's case before Minuchihr, who relented when he heard from the astrologers that a good and mighty warrior would come of the union. Rudabeh's mother won the consent of Mihrab, so that the young people were soon married with great pomp.

To Zal and Rudabeh, a son was born named Rustam, who, when one day old, was as large as a year-old child. When three years old, he could ride a horse, and, at eight years, he was as powerful as any hero of the time.

Nauder succeeded the good Minuchihr. Under him Persia was defeated by the Turanians, and Afrasiyab occupied the Persian throne. But Zal, whose father, Saum, had died, overthrew Afrasiyab and placed Zew upon the throne. Zew's reign was short, and Garshasp, his son, succeeded him.

When Garshasp was threatened by the Turanians, his people went for aid to Zal, who, because he was growing old, referred them to Rustam, yet of tender age. Rustam responded gladly, and his father commanded that all the horses from Zaboulistan to Kabul be brought forth that his son might select a steed therefrom. Every horse bent beneath his grasp until he came to the colt Rakush, which responded to Rustam's voice and suffered Rustam to mount him. From that day to his death, this steed was Rustam's faithful companion and preserver.

Garshasp was too weak to rule over the kingdom, and Zal dispatched Rustam to Mount Alberz, where he had been told in a dream that a youth dwelt called Kai-Kobad, descended from Feridoun. Kai-Kobad welcomed Rustam, and the two, with the noblest of the kingdom, defeated the power of Turan.

After a reign of a hundred years, the wise Kai-Kobad died, and was succeeded by his son, the foolish Kai-Kaus, who, not satisfied with the wealth and extent of his kingdom, determined to conquer the kingdom of Mazinderan, ruled by the daevas. Zal's remonstrances were to no avail: The headstrong Kai-Kaus marched into Mazinderan, and, together with his whole army, was conquered, imprisoned, and blinded by the power of the White Daeva.

When the news of the monarch's misfortune came to Iran, Rustam immediately saddled Rakush, and, choosing the shortest and most peril-beset route, set forth, unaccompanied, for Mazinderan. If he survived the dangers that lurked by the way, he would reach Mazinderan in seven days.

While sleeping in a forest after his first day's journey, Rustam was saved from a fierce lion by Rakush, who stood at Rustam's head. On the second day, just as he believed himself to be perishing of thirst, he was saved by a sheep that he followed to a fountain of water.

On the third night, Rakush, whom he had angrily forbidden to attack any animal without waking him, twice warned him of the approach of a dragon. The first time, the dragon disappeared when Rustam awoke, and he spoke

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severely to his faithful horse. The second time Rustam slew the dragon. Morning having dawned, Rustam proceeded through a desert where he was offered food and wine by a sorceress. Not recognizing her, and grateful for the food, he offered her a cup of wine in the name of God, and she was immediately converted into a black fiend, whom he slew.

He was next opposed by Aulad, whom he defeated and promised to make ruler of Mazinderan if he would guide him to the caves of the White Daeva. A stony desert and a wide stream lay between him and the demon. But the undaunted Rustam passed over them, and choosing the middle of the day, at which time Aulad told him the daevas slept, he slew the guards, entered the cavern, and after a terrible struggle overcame and slew the great daeva.

He then released Kai-Kaus and his army and restored their sight by touching their eyes with the blood from the daeva's heart.

Kai-Kaus, not satisfied with this adventure, committed many other follies, from which it taxed his warriors sorely to rescue him.

Once, Kai-Kaus was imprisoned by the king of Hamaveran after he had espoused his daughter. Again, he followed the advice of a wicked daeva and tried to search the heavens in a flying machine that descended and left him in a desert wasteland. It was only after this last humiliation that he humbled himself, lay in the dust many days, and at last became worthy of the throne of his fathers.

At one time, Rustam was hunting near the borders of Turan, and fell asleep, leaving Rakush to graze in the forest, where he was espied by the men of Turan, who captured him. When Rustam awoke, he followed his steed by the traces of Rakush's hoofs, until he came to the city of Samengan. The king received Rustam kindly, and promised to restore the horse if he could be found. While his messengers went in search of the horse, the king feasted his guest and led him for the night to a perfumed couch.

In the middle of the night, Rustam awoke to see a beautiful young woman enter the room accompanied by a maid. She proved to be the princess, who had fallen in love with Rustam. She pleaded with him to return her love, promising, if he did so, to restore his cherished horse. Rustam longed for his steed; moreover, the maiden was irresistibly beautiful. He accordingly yielded to her proposals, and the two were wedded the next day, the king having given his consent.

After tarrying some time in Samengan, Rustam was forced to return to Iran. Bidding his bride an affectionate farewell, he presented her with a bracelet.

"If thou art given a daughter, place this amulet in her hair to guard her from harm. If a son, bind it on his arm, that he may possess the valor of Nariman."

In the course of time, the princess bore a boy, christened Sohrab, who was like his father in beauty and boldness. But for fear that she would be deprived of him, she wrote to Rustam that a daughter had been born to her. To her son, she declared the secret of his birth, and urged him to be like his father in all things. But she warned him not to disclose the secret, for she feared that if it came to the ears of Afrasiyab, he would destroy Sohrab because of his hatred of Rustam.

Sohrab, who already cherished dreams of conquest, was elated at the knowledge of his parentage. "Mother," exclaimed he, "I shall gather an army of Turks, conquer Iran, dethrone Kai-Kaus, and place my father on the throne; then both of us will conquer Afrasiyab, and I will mount the throne of Turan."

The mother, pleased with her son's valor, gave him for a horse a foal sprung from Rakush—and fondly watched his preparations for war.

The wicked Afrasiyab well knew that Sohrab was the son of Rustam. He was also aware that it was very dangerous to have two such mighty warriors alive, since if they became known to each other they would form an alliance. He planned, therefore, to aid Sohrab in the war, keeping him in ignorance of his father's identity, and to manage in some

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way to have the two meet in battle, so that one or both might be slain.

The armies met and the great battle began. Sohrab asked to have Rustam pointed out to him, but the soldiers on his side were all instructed to keep him in ignorance. By some strange mischance, the two men whom his mother had sent to enlighten him were both slain. Rustam was moved at the sight of the brave young warrior, but remembering that Tahmineh's offspring was a daughter, thought nothing more of the thrill he felt at sight of him.

At last, Sohrab and Rustam met in single combat. Sohrab was moved with tenderness for his unknown opponent, and besought him to tell him if he was Rustam, but Rustam declared that he was only a servant of that chief. For three days, they fought bitterly, and on the fourth day, Rustam overthrew his son. When Sohrab felt that the end had come, he threatened his unknown opponent. "Whoever thou art, know that I came out not for empty glory but to find my father, and that though I have found him not, when he hears that thou hast slain his son, he will search thee out and avenge me, no matter where thou hidest thyself. For my father is the great Rustam."

Rustam fell down in agony when he heard his son's words and realized that his guile had prevented him from being made known the day before. He examined the onyx bracelet on Sohrab's arm; it was the same one that he had given Tahmineh. Bethinking himself of a magic ointment possessed by Kai-Kaus, he sent for it that he might heal his dying son, but the foolish king, jealous of his prowess, refused to send it, and Sohrab expired in the arms of his father.

Rustam's heart was broken. He heaped up his armor, his tent, his trappings, and his treasures, and flung them into a great fire. The house of Zal was filled with mourning, and when the news was conveyed to Samengan, he tore his garments, and his daughter grieved herself to death before a year had passed away.

To Kai-Kaus and a wife of the race of Feridoun was born a son called Saiawush, who was beautiful, noble, and virtuous. But his foolish father allowed himself to be prejudiced against the youth by slanderous tongues, so that Saiawush fled from the court and sought shelter with Afrasiyab in Turan. There, he speedily became popular, and took unto himself for a wife the daughter of Afrasiyab. But when he and his wife, Ferandis, built a beautiful city, the hatred and jealousy of Gersiwaz was aroused, so that he lied to Afrasiyab and said that Saiawush was puffed up with pride, and at last induced Afrasiyab to slay his son-in-law.

Saiawush had a son, Kai-Khosrau, who was saved by Piran, a kindhearted nobleman, and given into the care of a goatherd. When Afrasiyab learned of his existence, he summoned him to his presence, but the youth, instructed by Piran, assumed the manners of an imbecile, and was accordingly freed by Afrasiyab, who feared no harm from him.

When the news of the death of Saiawush was conveyed to Iran, there was great mourning, and war was immediately declared against Turan. For seven years, the contest was carried on, always without success, and at the end of that time, Gudarz dreamed that a son of Saiawush was living called Kai-Khosrau, and that until he was sought out and placed at the head of the army, deliverance could not come to Iran. Kai-Khosrau was discovered, and led the armies on to victory. When Kai-Kaus found that his grandson not only was a great warrior, skilled in magic, but also possessed wisdom beyond his years, he resigned the throne and made Kai-Khosrau ruler over Iran.

Kai-Khosrau ruled many long years, in which time he brought peace and happiness to his kingdom, avenged the murder of his father, and compassed the death of the wicked Afrasiyab. Then, fearing that he might become puffed up with pride like Jemschid, he longed to depart from this world, and prayed to Ormuzd to take him to his bosom.

The king, after many prayers to Ormuzd, dreamed that his wish would be granted if he

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set the affairs of his kingdom in order and appointed his successor. Rejoiced, he called his nobles together, divided his treasure among them, and appointed his successor, Lohurasp, whom he commanded to be the woof and warp of justice. Accompanied by a few of his faithful friends, Kai-Khosrau set out on the long journey to the crest of the mountains. At his entreaties, some of his friends turned back; those who stayed overnight in spite of his warnings found upon waking that they were covered by a heavy fall of snow, and were soon frozen. Afterward, their bodies were found and received a royal burial.

Lohurasp had a son, Gushtasp, who greatly desired to rule, and was a just monarch when he succeeded to the throne. Gushtasp, however, was jealous of his son, Isfendiyar, who was a great warrior. When Gushtasp was about to be overcome by the forces of Turan, he promised Isfendiyar the throne if he would destroy the enemy. But when the hosts were scattered, and Isfendiyar reminded his father of his promise, he was cast into a dungeon, there to remain until his services were again needed. When he had again gained a victory, he was told that the throne would be his when he had rescued his sisters from the brazen fortress of Arjasp, where they had been carried and imprisoned.

On his way to this tower, Isfendiyar met with as many terrible foes as Rustam had encountered on his way to the White Daeva, and as successfully overcame them. Wolves, lions, enchantresses, and dragons barred the way to the impregnable fortress, which rose three *farsakhs* high and forty wide, and was constructed entirely of brass and iron. But Isfendiyar, assuming the guise of a merchant and concealing his warriors in chests, won his way into the castle, gained the favor of its inmates, and made them drunk with wine. This done, he freed his sisters, slew the guards, and struck down Arjasp.

Instead of keeping his promise, Gushtasp hastened to set his son another task. Rustam was his pehliva, but it pleased him to send forth Isfendiyar against him, commanding him to bring home the mighty warrior in chains. Isfendiyar pleaded in vain with his father. Then he explained the situation to Rustam, and begged that he would accompany him home in peace to gratify his father. Rustam refused to go in chains, so the two heroes reluctantly began the hardest battle of their lives.

At the end of the first day, Rustam and Rakush were severely wounded, and on his return home, Rustam happened to think of the simurgh. Called by the burning of the feather, the kind bird healed the wounds of the hero and of Rakush, and she instructed Rustam how to slay his foe. "Seek thou the tamarisk tree, and make thereof an arrow. Aim at his eye, and there thou canst blind and slay him."

Rustam followed the directions and laid low the gallant youth. Isfendiyar died exclaiming, "My father has slain me, not thou, Rustam. I die, the victim of my father's hate. Do thou keep for me and rear my son!"

Rustam, who had lived so long and accomplished such great deeds, died at last by the hand of his half brother. This brother, Shugdad, stirred up the king of Kabul, in whose court he was reared, to slay Rustam because he exacted tribute from Kabul.

Rustam was called into Kabul by Shugdad, who claimed that the king mistreated him. When he arrived, the matter was settled amicably, and the brothers set out for a hunt with the king. The hunters were led to a spot where the false king had caused pits to be dug and lined with sharp weapons. Rustam, pleased with his kind reception and suspecting no harm, beat Rakush severely when he paused and would go no farther. Stung by the blows, the gallant horse sprang forward and fell into the pit. As he rose from this, he fell into another, until, clambering from the seventh pit, he and Rustam fell swooning with pain.

"False brother!" cried Rustam. "What hast thou done? Was it for thee to slay thy father's son? Exult now, but thou wilt yet suffer for this crime!" Then, altering his tone, he said gently,

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"But give me, I pray thee, my bow and arrows, that I may have them by my side to slay any wild beast that may try to devour me."

Shugdad gave him the bow, and when he saw the gleam in Rustam's eyes, he concealed himself behind a tree. But the angry Rustam, grasping the bow with something of his former strength, sent the arrow through tree and man, transfixing both. Then, thanking his Creator that he had been given the opportunity to slay his murderer, Rustam breathed his last.

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Destiny

An American Civil War Tale

During the American Civil War, a variant of the Jewish folktale "Appointment in Samarra" surfaced. The basic tale type features a man, or group of men, fleeing what appears to be imminent death, only to die, ironically, in another place. "Destiny" is a story of a young man establishing his courage, but the irony of his death places it in the category of the "Appointment in Samarra" tale type.

In the summer of 1862, a young man belonging to a Vermont regiment was found sleeping at his post. He was tried and sentenced to be shot. The day was fixed for the execution, and the young soldier calmly prepared to meet his fate.

Friends who knew of the case brought the matter to President Lincoln's attention. It seemed that the boy had been on duty one night, and, on the following night, he had taken the place of a comrade too ill to stand guard. The third night, he had been again called out and, being utterly exhausted, had fallen asleep at his post.

As soon as the president understood the case, he signed a pardon and sent it to the camp. The morning before the execution arrived, but the president had not heard whether the pardon had reached the officers in charge of the matter. He began to feel uneasy. Lincoln ordered a telegram to be sent to the camp, but he received no answer. State papers could not fix his mind, nor could he banish the condemned soldier boy from his thoughts.

At last, feeling that he must know whether the lad was safe, Lincoln ordered a carriage and rode rapidly for 10 miles over a dusty road beneath a scorching sun. When he reached the camp, he found that the pardon had been received and the execution stayed.

The sentinel was released, and his heart was filled with lasting gratitude. When the campaign opened in the spring, the young man was with his regiment near Yorktown, Virginia. They were ordered to attack a fort, and he fell at the first volley of the enemy.

The young man's comrades caught him up. They carried him bleeding and dying from the field.

"Bear witness," he said, "that I have proved myself not a coward, and I am not afraid to die." Then, making a last effort, with his dying breath he prayed for Abraham Lincoln.

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Greatest Liar of Them All

An Apache Folktale

Coyote is an important trickster figure of the American Southwest, specifically the Apache people. Tales about him can be found in almost every tribal group west of the Mississippi River, as far north as Oregon and Idaho, and down into Mexico. Traditionally, tales about him begin, "Coyote was going along . . ."

Coyote was going along one day when he came to a camp of men just sitting around, waiting for him.

"Coyote," they said, "we hear that you are the greatest liar of them all."

Coyote only shrugged. "How would you know such a thing?"

"Oh, everyone knows it. But how do you tell such great lies? Why does everyone always believe you? Come, show us how to lie."

Coyote shrugged again. "It was no easy thing to learn how to do. I had to pay a great price to learn how to lie so well."

"What price did you pay?"

"One horse, my finest buffalo horse." By that, he meant a horse well trained to run in close among the buffalo so his rider could make many kills.

"What, like this?" asked one man, and led forth a fine horse, his best buffalo horse.

Coyote studied the horse, which sidled nervously at the strange wolfish scent of the trickster. "Yes, this is exactly the sort of horse I mean. It was with one like him that I paid for my power to lie."

"But will you teach us to lie?" the men asked impatiently.

Coyote pretended to think it over. "Let me try to ride this fine buffalo horse. If he doesn't buck, I will explain my power to lie."

That sounded like a good bet to the men. After all, a buffalo horse is trained to be nice and mannerly.

Coyote got up on the horse's back, but he dug in with his claws. Naturally, the horse began to buck, and Coyote leaped off.

"He needs a blanket between him and me," Coyote said. "That is surely the problem."

So the men put a thick saddle blanket on the horse. Coyote mounted again, but his claws were sharp enough to prick right through the blanket. And, of course, the horse began to buck again.

Coyote leaped off. "He still wants something more on his back. A good saddle, I guess."

So the men saddled the horse with their best saddle. They gave Coyote a fine riding crop, too.

"I shall try the horse one more time," Coyote said. "If he still bucks, I won't be able to tell you the secret of my power."

He rode the horse a little distance away, just out of reach of the men, and then stopped.

"This is the secret of my power," Coyote said. "I trick people into giving me things. Like a blanket. Like a good saddle. Like a riding crop and a fine buffalo horse."

And with that, Coyote rode away, and the men could do nothing to stop him.

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Why Ananse Owns Every Story

An Ashante Folktale from Ghana

This retelling of "Why Ananse Owns Every Story," an Ashante folktale from Ghana, features Ananse, who is the primary trickster figure of both West Africa and the Caribbean. He is a spider, though he is sometimes portrayed as a man, or as a cross between a spider and a man, or as a spider with a man's clever eyes.

Kwaku Ananse, the Spider, wanted ownership of all the stories there were. Nyame, the sky god, owned them, so off Ananse went to Nyame.

"I wish to buy all the stories," the Spider said.

"They are, indeed, for sale," Nyame told him. "But the price is very high. Many people have tried to buy the stories, but they were unable to pay the price. Do you really think you can do what they could not?"

"Of course," Ananse said boldly. "What is the price?"

"You must bring me three things. First, bring me fierce Mmoboro."

"The hornets? Done."

"Second, bring me dangerous Onini."

"The python? Done."

"And last, bring me perilous Osebo."

"The leopard?" Ananse laughed. "The stories are as good as mine!"

Ananse scuttled home, cut a gourd from its vine, and drilled a small hole in it. Then he found a nice, large calabash, a bigger gourd, and filled it with water.

Off Ananse went to the tree where the hornets lived. Quickly, the Spider poured water from the calabash all over himself till he was dripping wet. He tossed water from the calabash all over the tree until the hornets were dripping wet as well.

"What are you doing out here in the rain?" Ananse cried. "Foolish people, I am too big to fit in this nice, dry gourd, but you are not. Come inside and stay dry!"

The hornets flew into the hole in the gourd. Ananse hastily plugged up the hole with a wad of grass. "You really *are* fools," he laughed, and scuttled to Nyame.

"I have brought you Mmoboro."

The sky god nodded. "That is one-third of the price. But now you must bring me dangerous Onini the python."

Ananse went home, cut himself a sturdy bamboo pole and a strong vine, and went looking for Onini the python.

As he went, Ananse pretended to be talking to himself. "My wife is foolish," he muttered. "I say he's longer. She says he's shorter. I say he's stronger. She says he's weaker. I am right. I know I am right."

Onini was overcome by curiosity. "Who is stronger? Who is longer?"

Ananse pretended to be startled. "Oh, it's nothing, mighty Onini."

"Tell me."

"Why, I have argued with my wife. She says you, mighty Onini, are shorter and weaker than this bamboo pole. Isn't that a foolish thing?"

"Foolish, indeed. Come, put the pole down, and I'll show you how much longer I am."

Ananse put the pole down and Onini stretched out beside it. "No," the Spider said, "not quite. That's better . . . no. You keep slipping, Onini. I can't really tell if you are longer or shorter than the pole. Let me tie you at one

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end so you can stretch out all the way without slipping."

Ananse used the vine to tie Onini's head firmly to the pole. He scuttled to the other end of the pole and tied Onini's tail to the pole, then wrapped the vine about every bit of the snake.

"Look at this," the Spider said. "My wife was right after all. You *are* shorter and weaker than the pole. I was foolish. But you are the bigger fool, since you are now my prisoner!"

Off Ananse staggered with Onini and the pole. "Here is the python."

Was Nyame surprised? The sky god only nodded. "That is two-thirds of the price. Now, though, you must bring me the perilous Osebo the leopard."

Ananse went into the forest where Osebo lived and dug a deep pit, covering it over with branches and dust until it was invisible.

"Hey, Osebo!" he called. "Here is someone for you to eat!"

Osebo came running. With a snarl and a crash, he fell right into the pit. Ananse waited a bit, then strolled up to the edge of the pit.

"Why, what is this?" he asked as though surprised. "Is that you, great Osebo? What are you doing in that hole?"

"I fell," Osebo snarled. "Help me out of here."

"Oh, no; oh, no. I would love to help you; I would. But if I pull you out, you will surely eat me."

"I will not."

"Then you will eat my wife."

"I will not."

"I don't know. . . ."

"I swear," shouted the leopard, "that I will not eat you or your wife or any spider anywhere! Now, help me out of here."

"Well . . . since you did make a promise . . . ," Ananse said. "Very well."

He pulled the top of a springy sapling down over the pit and tied it there with a vine. Then Ananse tied one end of a second vine to the top of that young tree and dropped the other end of the vine into the pit.

"Tie the vine to your tail," Ananse called. "Be sure to tie it tightly!"

Osebo tied the vine tightly to his tail. Ananse laughed and cut the first vine, the one that tied down the top of the springy sapling. It shot upright, snatching Osebo out of the pit. But now, the leopard hung upside down by his tail! Ananse quickly killed Osebo, then carried the leopard to Nyame.

"Here is Osebo," he said. "The third part of the price has been paid."

This time, the sky god was truly surprised. "From now on, all stories belong to you. From now on, whenever a story is told, the teller must say that it belongs to Ananse."

And so, from that day to this, all stories told by the Ashante are called Anansesem, the stories of Ananse the Spider.

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Brewery of Eggshells

A Changeling Folktale from Wales

Until the twentieth century, the fear of losing a baby to death or disease was a very real one in many countries, including Great Britain. In areas such as Wales, people held a strong belief in fairy folk. This led to an equally strong folk belief that a human baby might be exchanged by the fairies for one of their own, a changeling. There were even some tragic nineteenth-century accounts of parents so sure that their sickly baby was a changeling that they tried to kill it, sure the fairies would come to save the changeling and return their true child. Ways of revealing a changeling were said to be trickery to make it speak out or cruelty, such as holding it over a fire.

In Treneglwys (Wales), there was a certain shepherd's cot, or cottage, known by the name of Twt y Cymrws because of the strange strife that occurred there. A man and his wife lived there and had twins, whom the woman nursed tenderly. One day, while her husband was away in the fields, she was called away to the house of a neighbor who lived some distance away. She did not much like going and leaving her little ones all alone in a solitary house, especially as she had heard tell of the good folk (the fairy folk) haunting the neighborhood.

Well, she went and came back as soon as she could, but on her way back she was frightened to see some old elves of the blue petticoat crossing her path, even though it was midday. She rushed home, but she found her two little ones in the cradle, and everything seemed as it had been before.

After a time, the good people began to suspect that something was wrong, for the twins did not grow at all.

The man said, "They're not ours."

The woman said, "Whose else should they be?"

And so arose the great strife that the neighbors named the cottage after. It made the woman very sad, so one evening she made up her mind to go and see the Wise Man of Llanidloes, for he knew everything and would tell her what to do.

So she went to Llanidloes and told the case to the wise man. Now, there was soon to be a harvest of rye and oats, so the wise man said to her, "When you are getting dinner for the reapers, clear out the shell of a hen's egg and boil some potage in it, and then take it to the door as if you meant it as a dinner for the reapers. Then listen if the twins say anything. If you hear them speaking of things beyond the understanding of children, go back and take them up and throw them into the waters of Lake Elvyn. But if you don't hear anything remarkable, do them no injury."

So when the day of the reaping came, the woman did all that the wise man had ordered. She put the eggshell on the fire and took it off and carried it to the door, and there she stood and listened. Then she heard one of the children say to the other:

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Acorn before oak I knew,
An egg before a hen,
But I never heard of an
eggshell brew
A dinner for harvest men.

So she went back into the house, seized the children, and threw them into the lake. The goblins in their blue trousers came and saved their little ones, and the mother had her own children back. And so the great strife ended.

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Tam Lin

A British Folktale

The romantic fantasy ballad "Tam Lin" from Great Britain has been the subject of various novels and makes a good story for storytellers with fantasy-loving teenage or adult audiences. Although its original age is unknown, it was first collected by Sir Francis J. Child and is listed by him as Ballad 39 in his *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1882–1898). Sir Walter Scott also included it in his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802). It also can be found in prose form in *A Collection of Ballads* (1910) by Andrew Lang.

Briefly summarized, it is the story of Janet, a young noblewoman, who saves her lover, Tam Lin, from the Queen of Faerie.

O I forbid you, maidens a',
That wear gowd on your hair,
To come or gae by Carterhaugh,
For young Tam Lin is there.

There's nane that gaes by Carterhaugh
But they leave him a wad,
Either their rings, or green mantles,
Or else their maidenhead.
Janet has kilted her green kirtle
A little aboon her knee,
And she has broded her yellow hair
A little aboon her bree,
And she's away to Carterhaugh
As fast as she can hie.

When she came to Carterhaugh
Tam Lin was at the well,
And there she fand his steed standing,
But away was himsel.

She had na pu'd a double rose,
A rose but only twa,
Till upon then started young Tam Lin,
Says, Lady, thou's pu nae mae.

Why pu's thou the rose, Janet,
And why breaks thou the wand?
Or why comes thou to Carterhaugh
Withoutten my command?
"Carterhaugh, it is my own,
My daddy gave it me,
I'll come and gang by Carterhaugh,
And ask nae leave at thee."

Janet has kilted her green kirtle
A little aboon her knee,
And she has broded her yellow hair
A little aboon her bree,
And she is to her father's ha,
As fast as she can hie.

Four and twenty ladies fair
Were playing at the ba,
And out then came the fair Janet,
The flower among them a'.

Four and twenty ladies fair
Were playing at the chess,
And out then came the fair Janet,
As green as onie glass.

Out then spake an auld gray knight,
Lay oer the castle wa,
And says, Alas, fair Janet, for thee,
But we'll be blamed a'.

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"Haud your tongue, ye auld fac'd
knight,
Some ill death may ye die!
Father my bairn on whom I will,
I'll father none on thee."

Out then spak her father dear,
And he spak meek and mild,
"And ever alas, sweet Janet," he says,
"I think thou gaest wi child."

"If that I gae wi child, father,
Mysel maun bear the blame,
There's neer a laird about your ha,
Shall get the bairn's name.

"If my love were an earthly knight,
As he's an elfin gray,
I wad na gie my ain true-love
For nae lord that ye hae.
"The steed that my true love rides on
Is lighter than the wind,
Wi siller he is shod before,
Wi burning gowd behind."

Janet has kilted her green kirtle
A little aboon her knee,
And she has broded her yellow hair
A little aboon her bree,
And she's away to Carterhaugh
As fast as she can hie.

When she came to Carterhaugh,
Tam Lin was at the well,
And there she fand his steed standing,
But away was himsel.

She had na pu'd a double rose,
A rose but only twa,
Till up then started young Tam Lin,
Says, Lady, thou pu's nae mae.
"Why pu's thou the rose, Janet,
Amang the groves sae green,
And a' to kill the bonny babe
That we gat us between?"

"O tell me, tell me, Tam Lin," she says,
"For's sake that died on tree,
If eer ye was in holy chapel,
Or christendom did see?"

"Roxbrugh he was my grandfather,
Took me with him to bide
And ance it fell upon a day
That wae did me betide.

"And ance it fell upon a day
A cauld day and a snell,
When we were frae the hunting
come,
That frae my horse I fell,
The Queen o' Fairies she caught me,
In yon green hill do dwell.

"And pleasant is the fairy land,
But, an eerie tale to tell,
Ay at the end of seven years,
We pay a tiend to hell,
I am sae fair and fu o flesh,
I'm feard it be mysel.

"But the night is Halloween, lady,
The morn is Hallowday,
Then win me, win me, an ye will,
For weel I wat ye may.

"Just at the mirk and midnight hour
The fairy folk will ride,
And they that wad their true-love
win,
At Miles Cross they maun bide."

"But how shall I thee ken, Tam Lin,
Or how my true-love know,
Amang sa mony unco knights,
The like I never saw?"

"O first let pass the black, lady,
And syne let pass the brown,
But quickly run to the milk-white steed,
Pu ye his rider down.

"For I'll ride on the milk-white steed,
And ay nearest the town,
Because I was an earthly knight
They gie me that renown.

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"My right hand will be gloved, lady,
My left hand will be bare,
Cockt up shall my bonnet be,
And kaimed down shall my hair,
And thae's the takens I gie thee,
Nae doubt I will be there.

"They'll turn me in your arms, lady,
Into an esk and adder,
But hold me fast, and fear me not,
I am your bairn's father.

"They'll turn me to a bear sae grim,
And then a lion bold,
But hold me fast, and fear me not,
And ye shall love your child.

"Again they'll turn me in your arms
To a red het gand of airn,
But hold me fast, and fear me not,
I'll do you nae harm.

"And last they'll turn me in your arms
Into the burning gleed,
Then throw me into well water,
O throw me in with speed.

"And then I'll be your ain true-love,
I'll turn a naked knight,
Then cover me wi your green mantle,
And hide me out o sight."

Gloomy, gloomy was the night,
And eerie was the way,
As fair Jenny in her green mantle
To Miles Cross she did gae.

At the mirk and midnight hour
She heard the bridles sing,
She was as glad at that
As any earthly thing.

First she let the black pass by,
And syne she let the brown,
But quickly she ran to the milk-white steed,
And pu'd the rider down.

Sae weel she minded what he did say,
And young Tam Lin did win,
Syne covered him wi her green mantle,
As blythe's a bird in spring

Out then spak the Queen o Fairies,
Out of a bush o broom,
"Them that has gotten young Tam Lin
Has gotten a stately-groom."

Out then spak the Queen o Fairies,
And an angry woman was she,
"Shame betide her ill-far'd face,
And an ill death may she die,
For she's taen away the bonniest knight
In a' my companie.

"But had I kend, Tam Lin," said she,
"What now this night I see,
I wad hae taen out thy twa grey een,
And put in twa een o tree."

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The Smart Man and the Fool

A Fjort (Congolese) Folktale

In the late nineteenth century, English folklorist Richard Edward Dennett collected folktales from the Fjort people of what is now the Republic of the Congo. Dennett recorded both the style of the storytelling and the stories. The style, which incorporates audience participation, is practiced today. The following is an adaptation of Dennett's telling. Note that although the storyteller here is male, Dennett stated that both Fjort men and women told stories.

Imagine, then, a village in a grove of graceful palm trees. The full moon is shining brightly upon a small crowd . . . seated round a fire in an open space in the center of the village. One of them has just told a story, and his delighted audience demands another.

Thus he begins: "Let us tell another story; let us be off!"

All then shout: "Pull away!"

"Let us be off!" he repeats.

And they answer again: "Pull away!"

Then the storyteller commences:

> There were two brothers, the Smart Man and the Fool. And it was their habit to go out shooting to keep their parents supplied with food. Thus, one day, they went together into the mangrove swamp, just as the tide was going down, to watch for the fish as they nibbled at the roots of the trees. Fool saw a fish, fired at it, and killed it. Smart Man fired also, but at nothing, and then ran up to Fool and said, "Fool, have you killed anything?"
>
> "Yes, Smart Man, I am a fool, but I killed a fish."
>
> "Indeed, you are a fool," answered Smart Man, "for when I fired I hit the fish that went your way, so that the fish you think you killed is mine. Here, give it to me."
>
> The fool gave Smart Man the fish. Then, they went to their town, and Smart Man, addressing his father, said, "Father, here is a fish that your son shot, but Fool got nothing."

Here the crowd joins in and sings over the last sentence two or three times. Then the narrator continues:

> The mother prepared and cooked the fish, and the father and Smart Man ate it, giving none to Fool.
>
> Then they went again. And Fool fired, and with his first shot killed a big fish.
>
> "Did you hear me fire?" said Smart Man.
>
> "No," answered Fool.
>
> "No?" returned Smart Man. "See, then, the fish I killed."
>
> "All right," said Fool, "take the fish."
>
> When they reached home, they gave the fish to their mother, and after she had cooked it, Smart Man and his father ate it, but gave none to Fool. As

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they were enjoying the fish, a bone stuck in the father's throat. Then Smart Man called to Fool and bade him go for a doctor.

"No," said Fool, "I cannot. I felt that something would happen." And he sang:

"Every day you eat my fish,
You call me Fool,
And would let me starve."

The crowd here joins in, and sings Fool's song over and over again.

"How can you sing?" said Smart Man,
"when you see that our father is suffering?"
But Fool went on singing:
"You eat and eat unto repletion;
A bone sticks in your throat;
And now your life is near completion,
The bone is still within your throat.

So you, smart brother, killed the fish,
And gave the fool to eat?
Nay! But now he's dead perhaps you wish
You'd given the fool to eat."

The crowd goes on singing this until they are tired; and the storyteller continues:

While Fool was still singing, the father died. Then, the neighbors came and joined the family circle, and asked Fool how it was that he could go on singing now that his father was dead. And Fool answered them, saying: "Our father made us both, one a smart man, the other a fool. The Fool killed the food, and they ate it, giving none to the Fool. They must not blame him, therefore, if he sings while they suffer. He suffered hunger while they had plenty."

And when the people had considered the matter, they gave judgment in favor of the Fool, and departed.

The father died, and so had been justly punished for not having given food to the Fool.

He who eats fish with much oil must suffer from indigestion.

And now I have finished my story.

All answer, "Just so!"

"To-morrow may you chop palm kernels," says the narrator as he gets up and walks away.

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The Cauld Lad of Hilton

An English Folktale

In English folklore, a brownie generally is a helpful little spirit, usually male, that will straighten up the house in which he lives with "his" humans—as long as they never thank him or offer him clothes. The brownie in the following tale clearly is fed up with his job and is trying to find a way to convince the humans to get rid of him.

At Hilton Hall, long years ago, there lived a brownie that was the contrariest brownie you ever knew. At night, after the servants had gone to bed, it would turn everything topsy-turvy, put sugar in the salt cellars and pepper into the beer, and was up to all kinds of pranks. It would throw the chairs down, put tables on their backs, rake out fires, and do as much mischief as could be. But sometimes, it would be in a good temper, and then!

"What's a brownie?" you say. Oh, it's a kind of a sort of a bogle, but it isn't so cruel as a redcap! What! You don't know what's a bogle or a redcap! Ah, me! What's the world a-coming to? Of course, a brownie is a funny little thing, half man, half goblin, with pointed ears and a hairy hide. When you bury a treasure, you scatter over it blood drops of a newly slain kid or lamb, or, better still, bury the animal with the treasure, and a brownie will watch over it for you and frighten everybody else away.

Where was I? Well, as I was a-saying, the brownie at Hilton Hall would play at mischief, but if the servants laid out for it a bowl of cream, or a knuckle cake spread with honey, it would clear away things for them, and make everything tidy in the kitchen. One night, however, when the servants had stopped up late, they heard a noise in the kitchen, and, peeping in, they saw the brownie swinging to and fro on the jack chain, and saying:

Woe's me! woe's me!
The acorn's not yet
Fallen from the tree,
That's to grow the wood,
That's to make the cradle,
That's to rock the bairn,
That's to grow to the man,
That's to lay me.
Woe's me! Woe's me!

So they took pity on the poor brownie, and asked the nearest henwife what they should do to send it away. "That's easy enough," said the henwife, and told them that a brownie that's paid for its service, in aught that's not perishable, goes away at once. So they made a cloak of Lincoln green, with a hood to it, and put it by the hearth and watched. They saw the brownie come up, and seeing the hood and cloak, put them on, and frisk about, dancing on one leg and saying:

I've taken your cloak, I've taken your hood;
The Cauld Lad of Hilton will do no
more good.

And with that, the brownie vanished, and it was never seen or heard of afterward.

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The Cuckoo

A "Fool" Folktale of Gotham, England

A "fool" folktale is about a foolish but generally endearing person or a town of such people. One such town is Chelm, Poland. Another is Gotham, England, a real town, and one of the mysteries of the folk process is how it became known as a place of foolish people.

Once, in the long-ago days, spring came to the pretty little town of Gotham, England. All the people strolled about the streets, smelling the sweet flowers, feeling the warm air, and listening to the happy songs of the birds.

"Listen to the cuckoo," they said. "How sweetly she sings."

"What a pity she doesn't sing like this all the year round!" they added. "How nice it would be if we could always hear her. It would be like having spring with us all the year round."

Then one of the good folks had an idea. "What if we kept the cuckoo with us always? If we kept the cuckoo with us always, then spring would stay with us all the time, too!"

Spring all the time! How wonderful that sounded to everyone!

But how were they to keep the cuckoo with them? This was a problem, a true problem. The people of Gotham sat and thought about it a long, long time. Then all at once, the wisest of the wise men sprang to his feet.

"I know what we'll do," he cried. "We'll build a wall around the cuckoo. That way she will have to stay with us forever!"

This seemed like a wonderful idea to everyone, a splendid idea indeed! They grabbed bricks and pieces of wood and set about building a wall all around the tree in which the cuckoo sat.

All the while that they worked, the cuckoo kept singing, now and then cocking her head to look down in curiosity at what the humans did. Higher and higher grew the wall, while the cuckoo watched and sang, sang and watched. Higher and higher—

But all at once, the cuckoo grew bored with sitting still. She spread her wings, and of course, she flew lightly right over the top of the wall.

"Oh no!" the people cried. "Alas, alack! We almost had her. It was the wall that was at fault."

"Of course it was the wall," everyone agreed. "It wasn't tall enough! If only we'd built the wall just a little bit higher, the cuckoo would never have been able to fly over it!"

Being the good people of Gotham, not once did one of them ever realize that without a roof, not even the highest wall could hold in a bird!

"If only we had built the wall just a little bit higher," they said again, and sighed. But it was springtime, and the day was so bright and sunny that before long all the good folk of Gotham were smiling again.

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Dick Whittington and His Cat

A Medieval Folktale from England

The historic Richard Whittington (c. 1350–1423) was a merchant and the mayor of London during the reign of King Edward III. Although the tale of Whittington and his cat is pure fiction, the story is better known in Great Britain and the United States than is the actual man.

In the reign of the famous King Edward III, there was a little boy called Dick Whittington, whose father and mother died when he was very young. The boy remembered nothing at all about his parents and was left a ragged little fellow running about a country village.

For all this, Dick Whittington was a very sharp boy and was always listening to what everybody talked about. In this manner, Dick heard a great many very strange things about the great city called London, and he finally set out for it.

There, he nearly starved, but he finally found work in the house of a merchant, where he did whatever dirty work he was able for the cook. His bed stood in a garret, where there were so many holes in the floor and the walls that every night he was tormented by rats and mice. A gentleman gave Dick a penny for cleaning his shoes, so the boy bought a cat and, in a short time, had no more trouble with the rats and mice.

Soon after this, the master had a ship ready to sail, and as he thought it right that all his servants should have some chance for good fortune as well as for himself, he asked them all what they would send out. Poor Dick had nothing but his cat, which he sent on to find its fortune.

Now, Dick was more miserable than before. He decided to run away. So he packed up his few things and started very early in the morning, on All Hallow's Day, which is the first of November. The boy walked as far as Holloway, and there sat down on a stone, which to this day is called Whittington's stone, and began to think to himself which road he should take as he proceeded onward.

While he was thinking what he should do, the bells of Bow Church in London began to ring, and he fancied their sound seemed to say to him:

Turn again, Whittington
Lord Mayor of London.

He listened, and returned to London.

Meanwhile, the ship, with the cat on board, was a long time at sea. It was at last driven by the winds on a part of the coast of Barbary. The people treated the sailors very civilly and were very eager to buy the fine things that the ship had on board.

The captain was invited to the royal palace. But there he saw rats and mice everywhere, and the king and queen were quite unhappy about it. This land had no cats! So the captain hastily told the king he had a creature on board the ship that would dispatch all these vermin immediately. The king promised to load the ship with gold and jewels in exchange for the wonder.

Sure enough, the cat took care of the rats and mice, and the captain sailed with a fair wind for England. The ship arrived safely in

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London with the load of gold and jewels. The honest merchant promptly sent for Dick, who was overwhelmed by his sudden good fortune.

In time, history tells, Dick Whittington did, indeed, become mayor of London and was knighted by King Henry V. The carved figure of Sir Richard Whittington with his cat in his arms was to be seen until the year 1780 over the archway of the old prison of Newgate.

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Fire! Fire! Burn Stick!

A Cumulative Folktale from England

"Fire! Fire! Burn Stick!" is a classic example of a cumulative tale from England. Elements are added as the story progresses. Then, the elements are removed until nothing but the happy ending is left.

An old woman was sweeping her house, and she found a little crooked sixpence. "What," said she, "shall I do with this little sixpence? I will go to market and buy a little pig." As she was coming home, she came to a stile; the piggy would not go over the stile.

She went a little farther, and she met a dog. So she said to the dog, "Dog! Dog! Bite pig; piggy won't get over the stile, and I shan't get home tonight." But the dog would not.

She went a little farther, and she met a stick. So she said, "Stick! Stick! Beat dog; dog won't bite pig, piggy won't get over the stile, and I shan't get home tonight." But the stick would not.

She went a little farther, and she met a fire. So she said, "Fire! Fire! Burn stick; stick won't beat dog, dog won't bite pig, piggy won't get over the stile, and I shan't get home tonight." But the fire would not.

She went a little farther, and she met some water. So she said, "Water! Water! Quench fire; fire won't burn stick, stick won't beat dog, dog won't bite pig, piggy won't get over the stile, and I shan't get home tonight." But the water would not.

She went a little farther, and she met an ox. So she said, "Ox! Ox! Drink water; water won't quench fire, fire won't burn stick, stick won't beat dog, dog won't bite pig, piggy won't get over the stile, and I shan't get home tonight." But the ox would not.

She went a little farther, and she met a butcher. So she said, "Butcher! Butcher! Kill ox; ox won't drink water, water won't quench fire, fire won't burn stick, stick won't beat dog, dog won't bite pig, piggy won't get over the stile, and I shan't get home tonight." But the butcher would not.

She went a little farther, and she met a rope. So she said, "Rope! Rope! Hang butcher; butcher won't kill ox, ox won't drink water, water won't quench fire, fire won't burn stick, stick won't beat dog, dog won't bite pig, piggy won't get over the stile, and I shan't get home tonight." But the rope would not.

So she went a little farther, and she met a rat. So she said, "Rat! Rat! Gnaw rope; rope won't hang butcher, butcher won't kill ox, ox won't drink water, water won't quench fire, fire won't burn stick, stick won't beat dog, dog won't bite pig, piggy won't get over the stile, and I shan't get home tonight." But the rat would not.

So she went a little farther, and she met a cat. So she said, "Cat! Cat! Kill rat; rat won't gnaw rope, rope won't hang butcher, butcher won't kill ox, ox won't drink water, water won't quench fire, fire won't burn stick, stick won't beat dog, dog won't bite pig, piggy won't get over the stile, and I shan't get home tonight." But the cat said to her, "If you will go to yonder cow and fetch me a saucer of milk, I will kill the rat."

So away went the old woman to the cow. But the cow said to her, "If you will go to yonder haystack and fetch me a handful of hay, I'll give you the milk."

So away went the old woman to the haystack, and she brought the hay to the cow.

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As soon as the cow had eaten the hay, she gave the old woman the milk, and away the old woman went with it in a saucer to the cat.

As soon as the cat had lapped up the milk, the cat began to kill the rat, the rat began to gnaw the rope, the rope began to hang the butcher, the butcher began to kill the ox, the ox began to drink the water, the water began to quench the fire, the fire began to burn the stick, the stick began to beat the dog, the dog began to bite the pig, the little pig in a fright jumped over the stile, and so the old woman got home that night.

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The Gingerbread Boy

An English Folktale

While this particular version of "The Gingerbread Boy" is from England, the story of the runaway gingerbread boy—or man, or animated pancake—also can be found in other countries, including India. In all versions, the tale ends badly for the animated food, which gets eaten.

There was once a little old man and a little old woman who lived in a little old house at the edge of a wood. They would have been a very happy old couple but for one thing—they had no little child, and they wished for one very much. One day, when the little old woman was baking gingerbread, she cut a cake in the shape of a little boy and put it into the oven.

Presently, she went to the oven to see if the cake was baked. As soon as the oven door was opened, the little gingerbread boy jumped out and began to run away as fast as he could go.

The little old woman called her husband, and they both ran after him. But they could not catch him. And soon, the gingerbread boy came to a barn full of threshers. He called out to them as he went by, saying:

I've run away from a little old woman,
A little old man,
And I can run away from you, I can!

Then, the barn full of threshers set out to run after him. But though they ran fast, they could not catch him. And he ran on, till he came to a field full of mowers. He called out to them:

I've run away from a little old woman,
A little old man,
A barn full of threshers,
And I can run away from you, I can!

Then, the mowers began to run after him, but they couldn't catch him. And he ran on, till he came to a cow. He called out to her:

I've run away from a little old
woman,
A little old man,
A barn full of threshers,
A field full of mowers,
And I can run away from you, I can!

But though the cow started at once, she couldn't catch him. And soon, he came to a pig. He called out to the pig:

I've run away from a little old
woman,
A little old man,
A barn full of threshers,
A field full of mowers,
A cow,
And I can run away from you, I can!

But the pig ran and couldn't catch him. And he ran on, till he came across a fox, and to him he called out:

I've run away from a little old woman,
A little old man,
A barn full of threshers,
A field full of mowers,
A cow and a pig,
And I can run away from you, I can!

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Then, the fox set out to run. Now, foxes can run very fast, and so the fox soon caught the gingerbread boy and began to eat him up.

Presently, the gingerbread boy said, "Oh dear! I'm quarter gone!" And then, "Oh, I'm half gone!" And soon, "I'm three-quarters gone!"

And, at the very last, with the fox's final bite, the gingerbread boy said, "I'm all gone!" and he never spoke again.

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A Grain of Corn

A Cumulative Folktale from England

"A Grain of Corn" is a cumulative tale and rhyme from the English countryside. Like many of these types of tales and rhymes, it shows the standard threats of violence but manages at the end to skirt any actual killings.

Once upon a time, a farmer's wife was winnowing corn, when a crow, flying past, swooped off with a grain from the winnowing basket and perched on a tree close by to eat it. The farmer's wife, greatly enraged, flung a clod of dirt at the bird with such good aim that the crow fell to the ground and dropped the grain of corn, which rolled into a crack in the tree.

The farmer's wife, seeing the crow fall, ran up to it and seized it by the tail, crying, "Give me back my grain of corn, or I will kill you!"

The wretched bird, in fear of death, promised to do so, but when he searched for the grain, it had rolled so far into the crack that by neither beak nor claw could he reach it.

So he flew off to a woodman, and said:

Man! Man! Cut tree;
I can't get the grain of corn
To save my life from the farmer's wife!

But the woodman refused to cut the tree; so the crow flew on to the king's palace, and said:

King! King! Kill man;
Man won't cut tree;
I can't get the grain of corn
To save my life from the farmer's wife!

But the king refused to kill the man; so the crow flew on to the queen, and said:

Queen! Queen! Coax king;
King won't kill man;
Man won't cut tree.
I can't get the grain of corn
To save my life from the farmer's wife!

But the queen refused to coax the king; so the crow flew on till he met a snake, and said:

Snake! Snake! Bite queen;
Queen won't coax king;
King won't kill man;
Man won't cut tree;
I can't get the grain of corn
To save my life from the farmer's wife!

But the snake refused to bite the queen; so the crow flew on till he met a stick, and said:

Stick! Stick! Beat snake;
Snake won't bite queen;
Queen won't coax king;
King won't kill man:
Man won't cut tree;
I can't get the grain of corn
To save my life from the farmer's wife!

But the stick refused to beat the snake; so the crow flew on till he saw a fire, and said:

Fire! Fire! Burn stick;
Stick won't beat snake;
Snake won't bite queen;
Queen won't coax king;
King won't kill man;
Man won't cut tree;
I can't get the grain of corn
To save my life from the farmer's wife!

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But the fire refused to burn the stick; so the crow flew on till he met some water, and said:

> Water! Water! Quench fire;
> Fire won't burn stick;
> Stick won't beat snake;
> Snake won't bite queen;
> Queen won't coax king;
> King won't kill man;
> Man won't cut tree;
> I can't get the grain of corn
> To save my life from the farmer's wife!

But the water refused to quench the fire; so the crow flew on till he met an ox, and said:

> Ox! Ox! Drink water;
> Water won't quench fire;
> Fire won't burn stick;
> Stick won't beat snake;
> Snake won't bite queen;
> Queen won't coax king;
> King won't kill man;
> Man won't cut tree;
> I can't get the grain of corn
> To save my life from the farmer's wife!

But the ox refused to drink the water; so the crow flew on till he met a rope, and said:

> Rope! Rope! Bind ox;
> Ox won't drink water;
> Water won't quench fire;
> Fire won't burn stick;
> Stick won't beat snake;
> Snake won't bite queen;
> Queen won't coax king;
> King won't kill man;
> Man won't cut tree;
> I can't get the grain of corn
> To save my life from the farmer's wife!

But the rope wouldn't bind the ox; so the crow flew on till he met a mouse, and said:

> Mouse! Mouse! Gnaw rope;
> Rope won't bind ox;
> Ox won't drink water;
> Water won't quench fire;
> Fire won't burn stick;
> Stick won't beat snake;
> Snake won't bite queen;
> Queen won't coax king;
> King won't kill man;
> Man won't cut tree;
> I can't get the grain of corn
> To save my life from the farmer's wife!

But the mouse wouldn't gnaw the rope; so the crow flew on until he met a cat, and said:

> Cat! Cat! Catch mouse;
> Mouse won't gnaw rope;
> Rope won't bind ox;
> Ox won't drink water;
> Water won't quench fire;
> Fire won't burn stick;
> Stick won't beat snake;
> Snake won't bite queen;
> Queen won't coax king;
> King won't kill man;
> Man won't cut tree;
> And I can't get the grain of corn
> To save my life from the farmer's wife!

The moment the cat heard the name of mouse, she was after it; for the world will come to an end, before a cat will leave a mouse alone.

> So the cat began to catch the mouse,
> The mouse began to gnaw the rope,
> The rope began to bind the ox,
> The ox began to drink the water,
> The water began to quench the fire,
> The fire began to burn the stick,
> The stick began to beat the snake,
> The snake began to bite the queen,
> The queen began to coax the king,
> The king began to kill the man,
> The man began to cut the tree;
> So the crow got the grain of corn,
> And saved his life from the farmer's wife!

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The Sorcerer's Apprentice

An English Version of a World Folktale

"The Sorcerer's Apprentice," a world folktale, may be most familiar to modern story-tellers from Walt Disney's *Fantasia* (1940). However, the tale turns up in various versions from Egypt, most of Europe, and much of Asia. Sometimes, the conjuration is of an inanimate object, such as a broom; other times, the apprentice conjures a more dangerous being, such as a devil.

The following is an English version, as collected at the turn of the twentieth century by English folklorist Joseph Jacobs. It shows that a little learning can, indeed, be a dangerous thing.

There was once a very learned man in the north country who knew all the languages under the Sun, and who was acquainted with all the mysteries of creation. He had one big book bound in black calfskin and clasped with iron, and with iron corners, and chained to a table that was made fast to the floor. When he read out of this book, he unlocked it with an iron key, and none but he read from it, for it contained all the secrets of the spiritual world.

The book told how many angels there were in heaven, and how they marched in their ranks, and sang in their choirs, and what were their several functions, and what was the name of each great angel of might. And it told of the demons, how many of them there were, and what were their several powers, and their labors, and their names, and how they might be summoned, and how tasks might be imposed on them, and how they might be chained to be as slaves to man.

Now, the master had a pupil who was but a foolish lad. He acted as servant to the great master, but never was he suffered to look into the black book, hardly to enter the private room.

One day, the master was out. Then, the lad, as curious as could be, hurried to the chamber where his master kept his wondrous apparatus for changing copper into gold, and lead into silver, and where he kept his mirror in which he could see all that was passing in the world, and where he stored the shell which when held to the ear whispered all the words that were being spoken by anyone the master desired to know about.

The lad tried in vain with the crucibles to turn copper and lead into gold and silver. He looked long and vainly into the mirror; smoke and clouds passed over it, but he saw nothing plain. And the shell to his ear produced only indistinct murmurings, like the breaking of distant seas on an unknown shore. "I can do nothing," he said, "as I don't know the right words to utter, and they are locked up in yon book."

He looked round, and, see! The book was unfastened; the master had forgotten to lock it before he went out. The boy rushed to it and opened the volume. It was written with red and black ink, and much of it he could not understand; but he put his finger on a line and spelled it out.

At once, the room was darkened, and the house trembled; a clap of thunder rolled through the passage and the old room, and there stood before him a horrible, horrible form, breathing fire, and with eyes like burning lamps. It was the demon Beelzebub, whom he had called up to serve him.

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"Set me a task!" said he, with a voice like the roaring of an iron furnace.

The boy only trembled, and his hair stood up.

"Set me a task, or I shall strangle thee!"

But the lad could not speak. Then the evil spirit stepped toward him, and putting forth his hands touched his throat. The fingers burned his flesh. "Set me a task!"

"Water yon flower," cried the boy in despair, pointing to a geranium that stood in a pot on the floor. Instantly, the spirit left the room, but in another instant, he returned with a barrel on his back, and poured its contents over the flower. Again and again, he went and came, and poured more and more water, till the water on the floor of the room was ankle deep.

"Enough; enough!" gasped the lad, but the demon heeded him not; the lad didn't know the words by which to send him away, and still the demon fetched water.

It rose to the boy's knees, and still more water was poured. It mounted to his waist, and Beelzebub still kept on bringing barrels full. It rose to his armpits, and he scrambled to the tabletop. And now, the water in the room stood up to the window and washed against the glass, and swirled around his feet on the table. It still rose; it reached his breast.

In vain, the boy cried; the evil spirit would not be dismissed, and, to this day, he would have been pouring water, and would have drowned all Yorkshire. But the master remembered on his journey that he had not locked his book, and therefore returned. At the moment when the water was bubbling about the pupil's chin, the master rushed into the room and spoke the words that cast Beelzebub back into his fiery home.

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Tom Thumb's Adventures

A Medieval English Folktale

The folktale of Tom Thumb first appeared in print in the seventeenth century in both England and in a French version by the writer Charles Perrault. But the original story goes back in less complete form to at least the sixteenth century.

It is said that in the days of the famed Prince Arthur, who was king of Britain in the year 516, there lived a great magician, called Merlin, the most learned and skillful enchanter in the world at that time.

This great magician, who could assume any form he pleased, was traveling in the disguise of a poor beggar. Being very much fatigued, he stopped at the cottage of an honest plowman to rest himself, and asked for some refreshment.

The countryman gave the magician a hearty welcome. His wife, who was a very good-hearted, hospitable woman, soon brought him some milk in a wooden bowl and some coarse brown bread on a platter.

Merlin was much pleased with this homely repast and the kindness of the plowman and his wife, but he could not help seeing that though everything was neat and comfortable in the cottage, they seemed to be sad and much cast down. He therefore questioned them on the cause of their sadness and learned they were miserable because they had no children.

The poor woman declared, with tears in her eyes, that she should be the happiest creature in the world if she had a son. Even if he was no bigger than her husband's thumb, she would be satisfied.

Merlin was so much amused with the idea of a boy no bigger than a man's thumb that he made up his mind to pay a visit to the queen of the fairies and ask her to grant the poor woman's wish. The droll fancy of such a little person among the human race pleased the fairy queen, too, and she promised Merlin that the wish would be granted. A short time afterward, the plowman's wife had a son, who, wonderful to relate, was no bigger than his father's thumb.

The fairy queen, wishing to see the little fellow thus born into the world, came in at the window while the mother was sitting up in bed admiring him. The queen kissed the child, and, giving him the name of Tom Thumb, sent for some of the fairies, who dressed her little favorite as she bade them.

An oak-leaf hat he had for his crown;
His shirt of web by spiders spun;
With jacket wove of thistle's down;
His trousers were of feathers done.
His stockings, of apple-rind they tie
With eyelash from his mother's eye:
His shoes were made of mouse's skin
Tann'd with the downy hair within.

It is remarkable that Tom never grew any larger than his father's thumb, which was only of an ordinary size; but as he got older, he became very cunning and full of tricks. When he was old enough to play with the boys, and had lost all his own cherrystones, he used to creep into the bags of his playfellows, fill his pockets, and, getting out unseen, again join in the game.

One day, however, as he was coming out of a bag of cherrystones, where he had been pilfering as usual, the boy to whom it belonged chanced to see him. "Aha, my little Tommy,"

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said the boy. "So I have caught you stealing my cherrystones at last, and you shall be rewarded for your thievish tricks." On saying this, he drew the string tight around Tom's neck and gave the bag such a hearty shake that poor little Tom's legs, thighs, and body were sadly bruised. Tom roared out in pain and begged to be let out, promising never to be guilty of such bad practices again.

A short time afterward, his mother was making a batter pudding, and Tom, being very anxious to see how it was made, climbed up to the edge of the bowl. Unfortunately, his foot slipped, and he plumped over, unseen by his mother, head and ears into the batter. His mother stirred him into the pudding bag and put him in the pot to boil.

The batter had filled Tom's mouth and prevented him from crying out; but, on feeling the hot water, he kicked and struggled so much in the pot that his mother thought that the pudding was bewitched. Instantly, she pulled it out of the pot and threw it to the door. A poor tinker was passing by, spied the pudding, lifted it up, put it into his budget (bag), and walked off. As Tom had now got his mouth cleared of the batter, he began to cry aloud, which so frightened the tinker that he flung down the pudding and ran away.

The pudding having broken to pieces by the fall, Tom crept out covered over with the batter, and with difficulty he walked home. His mother, who was very sorry to see her darling in such a woeful state, put him into a teacup, and soon washed off the batter, after which, she kissed him and laid him in bed.

Soon after the adventure of the pudding, Tom's mother went to milk her cow in the meadow, and she took Tom along with her. As the wind was very high, fearing lest he should be blown away, she tied him to a thistle with a piece of fine thread. The cow soon saw the oak-leaf hat, and, liking the look of it, took poor Tom and the thistle at one mouthful. While the cow was chewing the thistle, Tom was afraid of her great teeth, which threatened to crush him to pieces, and he roared out as loud as he could, "Mother! Mother!"

"Where are you, Tommy, my dear Tommy?" cried his mother.

"Here, mother," replied he, "in the red cow's mouth."

His mother began to cry and wring her hands; but the cow, surprised at the odd noise in her throat, opened her mouth and let Tom drop out. Fortunately, Tom's mother caught him in her apron as he was falling to the ground, or he would have been dreadfully hurt. She then put Tom in her bosom and ran home with him.

Tom's father made him a whip of barley straw to drive the cattle with. One day, Tom went into the fields, but his foot slipped, and he rolled into a furrow. A raven that was flying overhead picked him up, flew with him to the top of a giant's castle that was near the seaside, and left him there.

Tom was in a dreadful state and did not know what to do; but he was soon even more dreadfully frightened, for old Grumbo, the giant, came up to walk on the terrace, and seeing Tom, he took him up and swallowed him like a pill. The giant had no sooner swallowed Tom, than he began to repent what he had done, for Tom began to kick and jump about so much that Grumbo felt very uncomfortable, and at last threw him up into the sea.

A large fish swallowed Tom the moment he fell into the sea, but the fish was caught soon after and was bought for the table of King Arthur. When the fish was opened to be cooked, everyone was astonished to find such a little boy, and Tom was quite delighted to be out again. They carried him to the king, who made Tom his dwarf.

Tom soon became a great favorite at court, for by his tricks and gambols he amused not only the king and queen, but also all the Knights of the Round Table. It is said that when the king rode out on horseback, he often took Tom along with him, and if a shower came on, Tom used to creep into His Majesty's waistcoat pocket, where he slept till the rain shower was over.

One day, King Arthur asked Tom about his parents, wishing to know if they were as

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small as he was, and whether they were rich or poor. Tom told the king that his father and mother were as tall as any of the persons about the court, but rather poor. On hearing this, the king carried Tom to the treasure, the place where he kept all his money, and told him to take as much money as he could carry home to his parents, which made the poor little fellow caper with joy. Tom went immediately to fetch a purse, which was made of a water bubble, and then returned to the treasury, where he got a silver threepenny piece to put into it.

Our little hero had some trouble in lifting the burden upon his back, but he at last succeeded in getting it placed to his satisfaction, and set forward on his journey. Without meeting with any accidents, and after resting himself more than a hundred times by the way, in two days and two nights, he reached his father's house in safety. Tom had traveled forty-eight hours with a huge silver piece on his back, and was almost tired to death when his mother ran out to meet him and carried him into the house.

Tom's parents were both happy to see him, and the more so as he had brought such an amazing sum of money with him, but the poor little fellow was excessively wearied, having traveled a half mile in forty-eight hours, with a huge silver threepenny piece on his back. His mother, in order to revive him, placed him in a walnut shell by the fireside, and feasted him for three days on a hazelnut, which made him very sick, for a whole nut used to serve him for a month.

Tom was soon well again, but as there had been a fall of rain, and the ground was very wet, he could not travel back to King Arthur's court; therefore, his mother, one day when the wind was blowing in that direction, made a little parasol of cambric paper and tied Tom to it. She gave him a puff into the air with her mouth, and he was soon carried on the wind to the king's palace.

Just at the time when Tom came flying across the courtyard, the cook happened to be passing with the king's great bowl of furmenty, which was a dish His Majesty was very fond of. Unfortunately, the poor little fellow fell plump into the middle of it, and splashed the hot furmenty about the cook's face.

The cook, who was an ill-natured fellow, being in a terrible rage at Tom for frightening and scalding him with the furmenty, went straight to the king and said that Tom had jumped into the royal furmenty and thrown it down out of mere mischief. The king was so enraged when he heard this that he ordered Tom to be seized and tried for high treason. There being no person who dared to plead for Tom, he was condemned to be beheaded immediately.

On hearing this dreadful sentence pronounced, poor Tom fell a-trembling with fear, but, seeing no means of escape, and observing a miller close to him gaping with his great mouth, as country boobies do at a fair, he took a leap, and fairly jumped down the miller's throat. This exploit was done with such agility that not one person present saw it, and even the miller did not know the trick that Tom had played upon him. Now, as Tom had disappeared, the court broke up, and the miller went home to his mill.

When Tom heard the mill at work, he knew he was clear of the court, and therefore he began to tumble and roll about, so that the poor miller could get no rest, thinking he was bewitched, so he sent for a doctor. When the doctor came, Tom began to dance and sing, and the doctor, being as much frightened as the miller, sent in haste for five other doctors and twenty learned men.

While they were debating this extraordinary case, the miller happened to yawn. Tom, seizing the chance, made another jump and alighted safely upon his feet in the middle of the table.

The miller, who was very much provoked at being tormented by such a little pygmy creature, fell into a terrible rage, and, laying hold of Tom, ran to the king with him; but His Majesty, being engaged with state affairs, ordered him to be taken away and kept in custody till he sent for him.

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The cook was determined that Tom should not slip out of his hands this time, so he put him into a mousetrap and left him to peep through the wires. Tom had remained in the trap a whole week when he was sent for by King Arthur, who pardoned him for throwing down the furmenty, and took him again into favor.

On account of his wonderful feats of activity, Tom was knighted by the king, and went under the name of the renowned Sir Thomas Thumb. As Tom's clothes had suffered much in the batter pudding, the furmenty, and the insides of the giant, fish, and miller, his majesty ordered him a new suit of clothes, and decreed that he be made a knight.

Of Butterfly's wings his shirt was made,
His boots of chicken's hide;
And by a nimble fairy blade,
Well learned in the tailoring trade,
His clothing was supplied.
A needle dangled by his side;
A dapper mouse he used to ride,
Thus strutted Tom in stately pride!

It was certainly very diverting to see Tom in this dress, and mounted on the mouse, as he rode out a-hunting with the king and nobility, who were all ready to expire with laughter at Tom and his fine prancing charger.

One day, as they were riding by a farmhouse, a large cat, which was lurking about the door, made a spring, and seized both Tom and his mouse. She then ran up a tree with them and was beginning to devour the mouse. Tom boldly drew his sword and attacked the cat so fiercely that she let them both fall. One of the nobles caught him in his hat and laid him on a bed of down in a little ivory cabinet.

The queen of fairies came soon after to pay Tom a visit, and carried him back to Fairyland, where he lived for several years. During his residence there, King Arthur and all the persons who knew Tom had died, and as he was desirous of being again at court, the fairy queen, after dressing him in a suit of clothes, sent him flying through the air to the palace, in the days of King Thunstone, Arthur's successor. Everyone flocked around to see him, and being carried to the king, he was asked who he was, whence he came, and where he lived. Tom answered:

My name is Tom Thumb,
From the fairies I've come.
When King Arthur shone,
His court was my home.
In me he delighted,
By him I was knighted;
Did you never hear of Sir Thomas
Thumb?

The king was so charmed with this address that he ordered a little chair to be made, in order that Tom might sit upon his table, and also a palace of gold that was to be a span high with a door an inch wide for Sir Tom to live in. He also gave him a coach, drawn by six small mice.

The queen was so enraged at the honor paid to Sir Thomas that she resolved to ruin him, so she told the king that the little knight had been saucy to her.

The king sent for Tom in great haste. Tom was fully aware of the danger of royal anger, so he crept into an empty snail shell and lay for a long time, until he was almost starved with hunger. When at last he ventured to peep out, he saw a fine large butterfly on the ground, near his hiding place. Tom approached very cautiously and climbed astride it, and he was immediately carried up into the air. The butterfly flew with him from tree to tree and from field to field, and at last returned to the court, where the king and nobility all strove to catch him. At last, poor Tom fell from his seat into a watering pot, in which he was almost drowned.

When the queen saw him, she was in a rage and said he should be beheaded; and he was again put into a mousetrap until the time of his execution.

However, a cat, observing something alive in the trap, patted it about till the wires broke, which set Tom free.

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The king again received Tom into favor, but Tom did not live to enjoy it. For a large spider one day attacked him, and although Tom drew his sword and fought well, the spider's poisonous breath at last overcame him: "He fell dead on the ground where he stood, and the spider suck'd every drop of his blood."

King Thunstone and his whole court were so sorry at the loss of their little favorite that they went into mourning and raised a fine white marble monument over his grave with the following epitaph:

Here lies Tom Thumb, King Arthur's
knight,
Who died by a spider's cruel bite.
He was well-known in Arthur's court,
Where he afforded gallant sport;
He rode at tilt and tournament,
And on a mouse a-hunting went.
Alive he filled the court with mirth;
His death to sorrow soon gave birth.
Wipe, wipe your eyes, and shake your
head,
And cry,—Alas! Tom Thumb is dead!

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Virgil the Magician

A Medieval English Folktale

Virgil the magician is actually the first-century C.E. Roman poet Virgil, author of the epic *Aeneid*. Why folk belief gradually turned a poet into a master magician is not known, but by the time of the Middle Ages, a series of folktales had evolved that feature him.

Some say that Virgil was the son of a nobleman; others say nothing about his rank at all. But all the tales agree that Virgil started his life as an ordinary boy, without a trace of magic but with a quick, inquiring mind.

One day, bored with his schoolwork since he had already outpaced all his teachers, he went walking in the wild hills, where he discovered a dark, mysterious cave and plunged inside to explore.

Virgil had gone quite a way into the cave, and was beginning to wonder if he shouldn't turn around while he could still find his way out, when he heard a cold voice whispering his name.

"Virgil . . . Virgil . . ."

"Who is it? Who calls?"

"Look, Virgil," the voice whispered. "Do you see the round stone set in the floor?"

By now, the boy's eyes had grown accustomed to the dim light filtering in from outside through cracks in the rock. "I see it," he said warily, "and the bolt holding it in place."

"I am trapped beneath that stone. Free me, Virgil."

"Not so quickly. First, who and what are you?"

"I am a mighty spirit," the cold voice whispered, "trapped under here till doomsday. Free me, Virgil, and I will give you books to make you the mightiest of all magicians."

That sounded intriguing to Virgil. But the boy wasn't about to act so trustingly, not when what was almost certainly an evil spirit was involved. "Not so quickly," he said. "First give me the books. Then I will free you."

The spirit ranted for a bit, but what choice was there? "The books are hidden behind rocks to your left and right," the cold voice whispered.

Sure enough, they were. A glance through them sent excitement racing through Virgil, for they were full of marvels.

But now he must free the spirit. Virgil pulled the bolt and stone aside, revealing a small opening. A great dark shape swirled up out of it, filling the cave in a moment, and the boy fell back against a rock. No doubt about what he had just released! He could feel evil whirling around that shape like a cold, cold mist.

But Virgil was ready. "You lied!" he said in seeming contempt. "You are no mighty spirit at all!"

"What's this? What's this? I *am* mighty, boy! I will show you just how great my powers are!"

Virgil only yawned. "Nonsense. No mighty spirit could ever have fit through such a tiny opening."

"I did! I did!"

"Bah. I don't believe you. You are nothing but a fraud."

"Why, you foolish little worm of a boy! Watch this!"

The evil spirit swirled back down into the opening. Virgil quickly replaced the stone, bolting it back in place. "You are the fool, spirit, not me. Stay there, you evil thing, as it was meant to be. Stay there till doomsday!"

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He took the magic books and left. Alone in the hills, Virgil hungrily began his magical studies. The days turned to months, and the months to years—ten years in all. At the end of those years, even though he was still a young man, Virgil had become a true magician.

But then he received a desperate message from his widowed mother. While he had been lost in the study of wonders, she had been slowly cheated by the rich relatives of her deceased husband. Now, she was at the edge of poverty.

Virgil hurried home, abashed that with all his magic, he had never realized his mother's peril. "But now I shall set things to rights," he assured her.

At first, he decided against using magic. Surely, such arts were not needed here! But the rich relatives merely shook their heads at his protests, claiming that they had taken no more than their just due. And when Virgil appealed to the emperor of Rome, he received not a word of satisfaction.

"We shall," the emperor's message read, "take the matter under advisement. It shall take years to check every record."

"The emperor," Virgil translated drily, "has been getting a percentage of the stolen profits from our relatives. Well, now, I can play games, too."

When the emperor's tax collectors came to claim the royal share of profits due from the corn harvest, Virgil shrugged. "Do you see any corn?"

He had, of course, hidden it all by magic. "Then we shall tax the profits from your wine harvest," the tax collectors decided.

Virgil shrugged. "Do you see any grapes?"

He'd hidden all the grapes away by magic, too. No matter what the tax collectors tried to tax, Virgil had hidden it away. At last, muttering angrily, they returned to court.

"You shouldn't have made an enemy of the emperor," Virgil's mother warned.

"He shouldn't have made an enemy of me!" the magician replied.

Sure enough, the emperor declared Virgil a rebel, and sent soldiers to besiege his castle. But Virgil cast a mighty spell that froze the soldiers in their tracks like so many statues. He left them there all day in warning. When he let them go again, the soldiers fled without a word.

"You cowards!" the emperor raged at them. "Are you afraid of one man?"

Yes, after spending that time as statues, they certainly were! But one didn't admit such things to the emperor.

The emperor sent a whole army after Virgil. But Virgil cast a mighty spell that created the illusion of an icy, raging river before them and a river behind them, trapping the army on a narrow strip of land. There, they stayed all day and night with no food or drink, smelling the delicious scents of roasting meat coming from the castle and hearing the sound of happy laughter.

One soldier, however, had been lagging behind and hadn't been caught by either river. He rode at full tilt for Rome and cried out to the emperor, "Your army is trapped and starving because of Virgil's magic!"

The emperor set out with every court magician he could find. Together, they all cast a sleep spell—and it caught Virgil off guard. His servants fell instantly asleep, and he managed to stay awake only by fighting the spell with all his will. Mind foggy and hands feeling heavier than stone, Virgil struggled to open his magic books, slowly turning page after page to find the spell he wanted.

Yes! Here it was, "Battling the Sleep Spell." Virgil shouted out a fierce word of power. Instantly, the sleep spell recoiled on the court magicians, and they fell fast asleep, while all of Virgil's men awoke.

The illusion of the two rivers was broken and vanished—but the emperor's soldiers and even the emperor himself were turned into living statues. There they were and there they stayed for a full two days.

On the morning of the third day, Virgil canceled his spell. The emperor and his soldiers became living folk once more. The emperor wisely sued for peace. He repaid Virgil's mother all the money owed to her and punished the rich relatives who had cheated her.

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"Will you be my court magician?" he asked Virgil.

Virgil knew that the emperor feared him. Fearful men never trust those who frighten them. But at least as court magician, he would know more easily if another attack on him or his people was planned. "I will," he agreed. "But I will not live in your palace. That would be too dangerous for your people when I work my magical experiments."

This was perfectly true. The emperor gave Virgil permission to build a fine castle for himself. Virgil's Castle of Eggs was, of course, magical. It was called this because its foundation rested on eggs, and nothing more solid than that. Virgil also built a tower for the emperor from which he could overhear any words of treason. And if there wasn't exactly peace between Virgil and the emperor, neither was there war.

There was another matter in which Virgil was not so successful. Magician or no, he was still human, young, and romantic. Alas, his magic frightened away the young women at court, and some of them mocked him. His anger at that mockery only made matters worse. Lonely because of all his powers, Virgil thought he would never find true love.

But then, traveling the world by magic, he landed in a beautiful garden by moonlight and came face-to-face with a young woman wandering alone. Virgil fell in love with her on the spot. And, more wonderful than any magic, so did she fall instantly in love with him.

"But you must not stay here!" she cried. "My father is the sultan of Babylon, and if he finds you here, he will slay you!"

"I'm not afraid, Princess. I am Virgil the magician. Let me show you the wonders of my castle."

To his delight, she had no fear of his magic. She gladly flew with him and wandered with him through his castle's halls and gardens, and they were joyous in each other's company. But at sunrise, Virgil returned her to her father's palace.

"Will you come to me tomorrow?" the princess asked.

"I will," Virgil promised, "though all your father's guards should block my path."

Alas, a servant heard and raced off to the sultan. "Your daughter has allowed a—a sorcerer to visit her!"

The sultan slipped a powerful sleeping potion into some wine and left it where his daughter was sure to find it and give it to her mysterious guest. So she did, and Virgil fell into a deep, drugged sleep.

He woke to find himself in prison, and the princess chained in there as well. "You have betrayed me!" the sultan shouted at them. "You have both brought dishonor to my name!"

"I have done nothing dishonorable," Virgil protested, "and neither has your daughter. This I swear on my magic."

"The oath of a sorcerer is worthless! And the fate of a sorcerer is the stake and the flame! You shall die this very day at sunrise."

"Then I shall die as well!" the princess cried.

"So you shall," the sultan said coldly. "He has corrupted you with his darkness."

The dawn came. Virgil and the princess were led to the stake, which was piled high with dry wood. But Virgil showed not the slightest sign of fear. He was waiting for the moment when the guards would release his chains so that they could bind him to the stake. For that instant, he would be free!

When the moment arrived, Virgil flung up his arms and shouted out a word of power. Suddenly, everyone there, all save Virgil and the princess, thought that a great flood had roared down upon them. They all began frantically trying to swim.

"Hurry," Virgil whispered to the princess, "before they realize this is only illusion. Will you come with me? Will you wed me?"

"Yes and yes," the princess told him.

The two of them flew magically away from Babylon to Virgil's castle. There, they were wed, and there, they lived in joy and magic for the rest of their lives.

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The Laplander Wizard

An Estonian Folktale of a Magician

Laplanders—or more properly, Saami, as they prefer to be called—are fair-haired, fair-skinned people, an ancient race of nomadic reindeer-herders who live in the northern reaches of Scandinavia, Finland, and Russia. There was a long-standing belief in Teutonic and Slavic countries that the Saami, particularly those who lived among the darker Finns (who have no genetic or cultural links with the Saami but with whom they are often confused in folklore), were, like the Finns, skilled in magic, possibly because both peoples had a tradition of shamanism. Laplander or Finnish wizards often make appearances in Scandinavian tales, usually as evil sorcerers.

While this may seem to be a very localized tale, it has its parallels in both Finnish and Swiss stories, while the motif of the wizard, sorcerer, or witch traveling in a whirlwind and being wounded or even slain by knife or sword is even more widespread, appearing in Finnish, Swiss, Bohemian, Italian, and even Appalachian American tales. As for the element of the black ox, it turns up in over a hundred variants collected in Finland, as well as in some from Switzerland and northern Italy.

Now, here is another wizard, a shaman, really, whose name we know not; perhaps it was lost in too many tellings of the tale, or perhaps he wished to keep such a powerful thing as a name secret.

At any rate, there he was in the land of the Laplanders, among whom, it was believed, were many powerful magicians. But magicians grow restless. And so one day, the Laplander wizard went traveling in the form of a whirlwind. Such traveling covers much ground but takes much strength. It was hard work even for a wizard, and he snatched up food as he went to keep the whirlwind from collapsing and himself with it.

Unfortunately, some of that food was wheat from a farm in Estonia, a farm owned by a good man but a rash one. The farmer was too furious at seeing his wheat disappearing to think about what he was doing. He snatched out his good, sturdy knife and threw it at the whirlwind with all his might—and sure enough, he heard a cry of pain. The whirlwind sped out of sight, and the farmer nodded in satisfaction. He'd chased away that whatever-it-had-been, that uncanny thief!

The next day, the farmer fell ill. No one could quite puzzle out what ailed him: He suffered no fever, no chill, nothing but a strange lack of strength.

"It is a spell," a doctor whispered at last, embarrassed at having to admit such a strange thing. "Go to Lapland. There are many powerful magicians there and surely you'll find one to heal you."

It was a long, weary journey for the farmer, but at last he reached the land of the Laplanders. Now where should he go? Where could he find the magician he needed? The farmer felt drawn to one house, and to that house he went.

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The first thing he saw as he entered was his own knife, stabbed into the wall. "My knife!" he gasped.

"So it was you who threw it," a voice said from the shadows. A stern-faced man in the brightly embroidered woolen robe of a Laplander stepped forward, limping slightly. "Yes," he told the farmer, who was wide-eyed with fright, "I was that whirlwind. It was me you wounded, and wounded quite badly."

"Y-you shouldn't have been stealing my wheat."

"Did that give you any right to try to kill me? You hit my leg; you might have pierced my heart."

The farmer winced. True, he realized only now, he *could* have shouted a warning instead of blindly throwing the knife. He would have done just that if the thief had been an ordinary man.

"I'm sorry," he murmured. "I was afraid and angry both; I wasn't thinking. What can I do to repay you?"

"You must serve me for seven years."

"B-but I'm ill."

"You are not ill," the Laplander wizard said.

And just as suddenly as that, it was true.

So, for seven years, the farmer served the Laplander wizard, doing the ordinary jobs little different from those he'd done on his own farm. He learned almost nothing about magic in those years, but if the Laplander wizard wasn't overly kind to him, he wasn't cruel either. The wizard's son, his father's apprentice, was a little more friendly, enough to keep the farmer from truly despairing.

But seven years is a long time to live away from home. One Christmas Eve, the loneliness grew too great, and the farmer wept. "My poor wife! Will I ever see her again?"

The Laplander wizard overheard him and sighed ever so softly. "You truly long for her."

"Wizard, nothing could give me greater joy than to be at home at her side for Christmas."

"You have served me honestly, without a word of complaint. But we agreed on seven years of servitude. Seven is no ordinary number, and if I let you go now, the loss of its magic can only be balanced by a gift."

"I—I'll give you an ox, a fine, fat ox. The black ox, if he's still living."

"He is," the Laplander wizard said, his eyes strange and vague for a moment; he was using, the farmer knew, far-sight. "So be it. You shall be home before morning."

"But how—"

"My son will see you there. Go."

Hardly daring to hope, the farmer went outside. There sat the wizard's son in what looked very much like a great feed trough. "Come, get in!" the boy cried.

No sooner had the farmer seated himself, than the trough soared up in the sky, riding the winds as lightly as a bird. The farmer gasped at the speed and height. "My cap!" he cried as the wind tore it from his head.

"Too late!" the wizard-boy laughed. "We are already far from there. Look, here is your farm. Hold fast!"

They spiraled down to a landing, soft as a fallen leaf. The farmer scrambled out and raced into his house. Oh, what a wonderful, wonderful reunion he had with his wife!

"The boy!" he remembered suddenly, "The wizard's son! I promised the wizard our black ox, if the ox still lives."

"It does," his wife assured him.

The farmer went outside, looking for the wizard's son, but he failed to find him. "Has he already gone home? And left my debt with his father unpaid?"

He hurried into the barn. Sure enough, the black ox was gone. The wizard's son had taken the payment and left without a word.

The Laplander wizard never came to the farmer's lands again. And as for the farmer, well, he never acted rashly again. In fact, in the years that followed, he gained a fine name for himself as a happy, prudent man.

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The Brave Little Tailor

A German Folktale

"The Brave Little Tailor" is a classic tale, most familiar in the West as the version printed by the Brothers Grimm in their *Household Tales*. The basic theme is of the "little" man overcoming all obstacles—including his original boast—by his basic cleverness, or downright trickery. All cultures enjoy seeing the ordinary person triumphing over the mighty, which may explain the story's popularity.

The earliest written evidence of this German version dates to 1557, but there are also oral versions from Armenia, Cambodia, Italy, Russia, and many more places. While the hero's tests vary, the basic story remains the same.

A little tailor sat sewing by the window. He was in good spirits, finishing off a jacket before taking a bite of his bread and jam, enjoying the sweet aroma rising from the jam. But when he was ready to eat, he found a flock of flies attacking his food. The little tailor grabbed a piece of cloth and smote seven of them. He was so satisfied that he made a belt embroidered with the words "Seven at one blow!"

Inspired by his own bravado, the little tailor set out into the world, in his pocket a cheese from his pantry and a bird he had caught.

At the top of a mountain, he found a giant. The giant was not at all impressed with this small human until he saw that "Seven at one blow!" and was sure it meant that the tailor had killed seven men with one blow.

Now, the giant decided to test the tailor. Taking up a stone, he squeezed it till water dropped from it. The tailor took out the cheese and squeezed it till the liquid dropped from it. The giant picked up a stone and threw it so high, it couldn't be seen. The tailor said that he could throw something that would never come back to Earth and launched the bird, which of course flew off. Now the giant challenged the tailor to help carry a mighty tree out of the forest. The tailor perched on a branch, and the giant never saw that he was carrying the whole tree by himself.

The trickery continued, until the giant and his colleagues tried to murder the tailor while he slept. The tailor hid and watched the giants smash the bed on which they thought he was lying. In the morning, the tailor cheerfully walked up to them, and they fled in terror.

The tailor went on to the royal court, and the king, sure this was a mighty warrior, took him into the royal service. The soldiers were angry that this nobody was with them, one who might slay seven of them at a blow if he was angered. But the king did not know how to get rid of the tailor. So he set him on a task to kill two murderous giants. If he did this, the king said he would give him the hand of his daughter and half the kingdom.

Refusing to let any of the guards go with him, the little tailor entered the forest and found the two giants asleep under a tree. He took up two pocketfuls of stones, climbed a tree, and started a fight between the giants by dropping stones first on one, then on the other, until they were so angry about having rocks thrown at them—they thought by each other—that they killed each other.

The little tailor wanted the promised reward. The king, however, had second

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thoughts. He ordered the tailor to catch a dangerous unicorn. The tailor took a rope and an axe with him into the forest, and when the unicorn charged him, he dodged. The unicorn's horn went into the trunk of a tree, the tailor roped the animal, cut the horn free, and brought the unicorn back to the king.

Now, the king demanded that the tailor catch a fierce wild boar. The tailor lured the boar into chasing him, ran into a chapel with the boar following, then leaped out the one small window—too small for the boar—and locked the door.

Now, the king had no choice. He gave the tailor the hand of his daughter and half the kingdom. The princess, though, soon realized that her warrior husband was actually a tailor and wanted her father to get rid of this mere nobody. The king told her to leave the door open that night so his servants could enter, carry off the tailor as he slept, and toss him on board a ship, which would carry him into the wide world.

But the tailor, who had made friends with many at the court by this time, was warned in time. And so, when the servants came for him, he shouted out while pretending to be asleep, "I smote seven at one blow. I killed two giants. I brought away one unicorn and caught a wild boar. Am I to fear those who are standing outside the room?"

The servants were terrified and ran away. After that, no one raised a hand to the tailor, and he became a king and stayed king to the end of his life.

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Rumpelstiltskin

A German Folktale

"Rumpelstiltskin" is a popular world folktale that centers on the power of the name as magic, a common folk belief. Versions of this tale have been collected in France, Great Britain, Iceland, Italy, and Scandinavia. The best-known version of this story is surely that from the Brothers Grimm.

A poor miller with a beautiful daughter told the king that she could spin straw into gold. The king took him up on the promise and had the girl brought to a room full of straw. Giving her a spinning wheel and spindle, he told her that she had one night to spin all the straw into gold—or die.

The poor girl, all alone, burst into tears. Suddenly, there appeared a tiny man who asked why she wept. She told him that she had to spin the straw into gold and had no idea how to do it. The little man asked what she would give if he did the job, and she gave him her necklace. Sure enough, he spun the straw into gold.

That morning, the king saw the gold but wanted even more straw spun into gold. Again, the poor girl was left alone in a room filled with straw. And again, the tiny man appeared. This time, he demanded the ring from her finger. Getting that, he spun all the straw into gold.

Now, the king said that he would marry the miller's daughter—but only if she could spin straw into gold a third time.

This time, when the tiny man appeared, he made her promise to give him her first child when she became queen. The girl, thinking that would never happen, agreed, and he spun the straw into gold.

When the king came in the morning and saw the gold, he made the miller's daughter his queen. A year later, she had a beautiful son. That day, the tiny man appeared and demanded the child. The queen frantically bargained with him and wept. At last, he agreed: She had three days to guess his name—or lose her child.

For two days and nights, the queen tried to guess his name—and failed. But on the third day, a messenger said that he'd come to an odd house in front of which danced an odd little man, who cried:

Tomorrow I brew, today I bake,
And then the child away I'll take;
For little deems my royal dame
That Rumpelstiltskin is my name!

When the tiny man appeared before the queen, she twice pretended not to know his name, but on the third try, she asked him, "Is your name, perhaps, Rumpelstiltskin?"

The tiny man was so furious that in his rage he drove his right foot so far into the ground that it sank in up to his waist. Then, in a passion, he seized his left foot with both hands and tore himself in two.

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The Six Swans

A Shape-Shifting Folktale from Germany

The widely told folktale "The Six Swans," probably best known in the version collected by the Brothers Grimm, features shape-shifting and the courage of a sister determined to save her brothers. Versions of this tale have been found in the Arab Near East, England, France, Greece, Italy, Russia, and Scandinavia. Perhaps the reason the folktale has remained so popular is that it is both magical and a firm story of familiar love.

Once upon a time, a king went hunting and got so lost that he agreed to marry a strange old woman's beautiful daughter in exchange for a rescue. After he had taken the beautiful but inexplicably frightening maiden up on his horse, the old woman showed him the way, and the king reached his royal palace again, where the wedding was celebrated.

The king had already been married once, and he had by his first wife seven children, six boys and a girl, whom he loved better than anything else in the world. But the new queen hated them, so for the boys she made little shirts of white silk with charms sewn inside them. She threw one of the little shirts over each of the boys, and, as soon as the shirts touched their bodies, they were changed into swans and flew away over the forest.

But the girl escaped. She told her father what had happened, and even gave him some shed feathers as proof. But he refused to believe that his wife was responsible. The girl knew she wasn't safe at home and went to seek her brothers.

Eventually, she caught up with the six swans just as they transformed back into her brothers. They told her that they could shed their swan skins and be human for only one-quarter of an hour every night. The only way they could be rescued was if their sister agreed to neither speak nor laugh for six years, and during that time to sew six shirts of starwort (or, in some translations, stinging nettles). If she said so much as a word, all would be lost.

The brothers flew away. Their sister was determined to rescue them, even if it meant her life. She began to work right away on the starwort shirts.

Time passed, and the king of that country came to hunt in the forest. His men found the girl and wondered who she was. But she said nothing. They brought her before the king, who instantly fell in love with her, even though she said nothing, not even when he took her back to his castle and declared his love to her and his court. Even though she still said nothing, they soon were wed.

The king's mother, though, hated the idea of her son being married to a woman who never spoke and continued to sew those odd shirts. After a year, the young queen had a son, but the evil mother stole it away and made it seem like the young queen had murdered it. Since she would not speak, she could not defend herself. The king, however, would not believe she was guilty. But when this happened three times over the years, the king at last had to sentence her to death by fire.

When the day came for the sentence to be executed, it was the last day of the six years

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during which she was not to speak or laugh. The six shirts were ready, with only the left sleeve of the sixth still missing. Even as she was led to the stake, she frantically tried to finish it, and clung to all six shirts.

Just as the fire was about to be lit, six swans came flying through the air toward her and sank down so that she could throw the shirts over them. As each was touched by a shirt, the swan's skin fell away, and he became human once again. The youngest lacked only his left arm, and had in the place of it a swan's wing on his shoulder.

Now, the young queen could defend herself. She told the king all that had happened, and how his mother had hidden away their three children.

Then, to the great joy of the king, the missing children were found. The king's evil mother was executed, and the king and queen, their children, and her six brothers lived many years in happiness and peace.

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The Twelve Dancing Princesses

A German Folktale

"The Twelve Dancing Princesses," a rather odd folktale, is a familiar one in Europe and the United States. While it is known in various forms throughout Europe, it is perhaps best known in the version published by the Brothers Grimm. Versions of this story have been collected in the Cape Verde Islands, as well as in France, Portugal, and Russia.

That the princesses seem so heartless may offend some modern storytellers and listeners. Indeed, Victorian tellers and writers often left out the detail about the young men who failed to discover the princesses' secret being put to death. There is also no clear explanation of who the mysterious princesses might be, or whether the underground world is or is not Faerie. It is up to each storyteller to decide whether or not to alter details, since there is no such thing as a right or wrong version of a world tale.

There was a king who had twelve beautiful daughters. They slept in twelve beds all in one room, and when they went to bed, the doors were shut and locked up. However, every morning, their shoes were found to be quite worn through, as if they had been danced in all night. Nobody could find out how it happened, or where the princesses had been.

So the king made it known to all the land that if any man could discover the secret and find out where it was that the princesses danced in the night, he could take the one he liked best as his wife, and would be king after the death of the princesses' father. But those who tried and did not succeed, after three days and nights, would be put to death.

Everyone who tried to discover the secret failed, falling asleep and seeing nothing.

Then an old soldier, back from the wars, happened to meet an old woman in the woods. She asked him where he was going, and he answered that he was going to find out where the princesses went each night. The old woman warned him not to drink anything the princesses gave him at night, and to only pretend to sleep. She also gave him a cloak of invisibility.

That night, the soldier was welcomed at court and was shown to an outer chamber where the princesses slept. The eldest of the princesses brought him a cup of wine, but he only pretended to drink and to fall asleep. He watched the princesses dress in fine clothes and seem delighted about going dancing. Only the youngest was uneasy, sure something bad was going to happen.

Then, the eldest princess clapped her hands, and a trapdoor flew open where her bed had been. The twelve princesses started down into the opening, and the soldier wrapped his cloak of invisibility about himself and followed. On the way down the stairway, he accidentally stepped on the hem of the youngest princess's gown, and she cried out, but the others told her it had been nothing but a nail snagging the cloth.

At the bottom of the stairway was a grove of glittering silver-leaved trees. The soldier broke off a twig as evidence. They came to another grove, this one of golden trees, then a third

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made all of diamonds, and in these groves, too, the soldier broke off a twig. Each time he did this, the youngest princess jumped at the noise, but the others only scoffed at her nervousness.

They came to a great lake on which lay twelve little boats with twelve handsome princes in them. One princess went into each boat; the soldier slipped into the same boat as the youngest.

On the other side of the lake stood a castle from which came merry music. There, each prince danced with his princess. They danced on till all their shoes were worn out.

Then, the princes rowed the princesses back again over the lake. On the opposite shore, they took leave of each other, the princesses promising to come again the next night.

The soldier was brought before the king, who asked him where his daughters danced at night. The soldier told the king all that had happened, and showed him the evidence that he had brought with him.

The twelve princesses confessed everything. The king asked the soldier which princess he would take as his wife.

Since he was no longer young, the soldier chose the eldest princess. They were wed, and the soldier became the heir to the throne.

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Cuchulain and the Green Man

An Ancient Irish Folktale

Cuchulain is a hero out of Irish myth and folklore, a culture hero whose mother is a mortal princess but whose father is said to be the god Lugh. Cuchulain's most famous exploits appear in the *Tain,* or *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (*Cattle Raid of Cooley*), the epic of Ulster, Ireland, from the eleventh or twelfth century C.E. The tale "Cuchulain and the Green Man" was later absorbed into the Arthurian cycle as an exploit not of Cuchulain but of the knightly hero Gawain.

Now, no one ever denied that Cuchulain was the nephew of King Conor of Ulster, since he was the son of the king's sister Dechtire. But it was said, and for all anyone knew said truly, since Dechtire was dead and had never spoken of the boy's sire, that his father was no mortal man, but the great god Lugh of the Sun's splendor.

Whether or not he was half divine, Cuchulain was raised by his uncle, and, even as a young boy, he showed signs that he would grow into a true hero. Indeed, by the time Cuchulain was seventeen, he had no equal among the warriors of Ulster. And since he was a handsome youngster, Conor's men were glad that he was a modest sort who never looked for trouble with other men's wives. Still, they were also glad when he won the hand of Emer, daughter of Forgall the Wily.

But not everyone appreciates peace and tranquility. One of King Conor's men was known as Bricriu of the Bitter Tongue, since he forever liked making barbed remarks and delighted in making mischief. Inviting the members of King Conor's court to dinner, Bricriu arranged that a contest should arise over who should have the "champion's portion," knowing that there were three hotblooded young men who could claim that honor. They were Laegaire, Conall Cearnach, and Cuchulain.

So successful was Bricriu in playing to their pride and to the secret insecurity of young men, that there was nearly a fight there and then. King Conor, furious at this breaking of the laws of hospitality, ordered the three hotbloods to take their argument elsewhere. So to avoid a bloody fight, the three heroes went off to submit their claims to the championship of Ireland to King Ailill of Connaught.

Ailill put the heroes to a strange test. Their dinner was served them in a separate room. Suddenly, three monstrous cats, as black as night and blazing red of eyes, burst into the room. The startled Laegire and Conall leaped up among the rafters, but Cuchulain stood his ground. He waited until a cat attacked, then struck it a sharp blow with his sword. With that, the three monstrous cats disappeared.

Cuchulain claimed that he had won the championship. But Laegire and Conall protested fiercely that they had been too startled to have a chance to properly react, and that this test had been an unfair one.

King Ailill must have sighed with frustration, or perhaps shaken his head wryly, remembering his own youth. But without any argument, he sent the three rivals off to Curoi of Kerry, who was a just and wise man—and one who was wise in the ways of magic. Curoi ordered that the three, in turn, stand watch outside his castle that night.

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First it was Laegire's turn. He was confronted by a huge giant, a great boulder of a being who hurled spears that were the trunks of trees at Laegaire. The young man dodged and tried to attack, but the giant reached down, caught him up like an unwanted kitten, and hurled him over the castle wall. Laegire landed with a thump, too winded and bruised to go back outside.

"You are no champion!" Conall sneered, and went to take his turn on guard. But he, too, was confronted by the huge giant, who hurled those terrible spears at him. Conall, too, dodged and tried to attack. But he met with the same fate as Laegire, being caught up and hurled over the castle wall. He, too, landed too winded and bruised to go back outside.

Cuchulain did not sneer or boast. He simply went outside to stand watch. The giant loomed out of the darkness and began hurling his terrible tree-trunk spears. Cuchulain dodged, but waited to attack, biding his time. Only when the giant moved in to seize him did Cuchulain cast his own spear. He pierced the giant to the heart—and the giant vanished.

But that was not the end of Cuchulain's trials. The young man was beset by monsters on every side, and he fought fiercely with sword and spear to survive. Then a great winged creature came lunging down at him. Cuchulain sprang up with a great hero-leap, thrust his hand down the thing's throat, and tore out its heart. As the monsters disappeared as the giant had done, Cuchulain made another great hero-leap over the castle wall in triumph.

"Not fair!" was the cry of his rivals. "He used magic to win, where we had none."

"So be it," Curoi said. "Return to King Conor's court at Armagh and await my judgment."

Off the three went, and soon they joined all the Ulster heroes in King Conor's great hall. Suddenly, a stranger entered, hideous and gigantic, with eyes of blazing yellow. In one mighty hand, he clasped a great, gleaming axe.

"What business have you here?" King Conor asked as calmly as though this were just an ordinary man.

The stranger replied in a voice that boomed like thunder, "Behold my axe! Whoever grasps it today may behead me—if I may, in the same way, cut off his head tomorrow. Come, who will take up the challenge? If there is none who dare face me, I will state that Ulster has lost her courage and her honor!"

Laegire sprang to his feet, shouting, "Ulster has not lost her courage! I accept your challenge."

With a shrug, the giant laid his head on a block. Laegire swung the axe with all his force and, with one blow, severed the giant's head from his body. But to the horror of everyone in the hall, the giant got to his feet, took his axe in one and his head in the other, and strode from the hall.

The following night, the giant returned, head on his shoulders and as sound as ever. But Laegire's courage failed him, and he snuck off into the night.

"So *this* is the courage of Ulster!" the giant sneered.

Conall Cearnach sprang to his feet. "I will not fail you!" he shouted.

Once again, the giant knelt, and once again, he was beheaded. Once again, he stalked off, head in hand—but when he returned, there was no Conall Cearnach to be found.

"Is there no true warrior in all Ulster?" the giant jeered.

"There is," Cuchulain said quietly.

As the other two had done, he cut off the giant's head at one stroke. As before, the giant strode away with head in hand.

The next night, Conor and his men waited to see what Cuchulain would do. He did nothing, save sit quietly. To Conor, he murmured, "This night will surely see my death. But I would rather die than break my sworn word."

The giant strode into the hall, swinging his axe. "Where is Cuchulain?" he cried.

Cuchulain got to his feet. "Here I am."

"Ah, poor boy!" the giant said. "The fear of death lies heavy on you. At least, you have kept your word and have not failed me."

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As the giant stood with the great axe ready, Cuchulain knelt to receive the blow and laid his head on the block.

But the giant wasn't satisfied. "Don't cringe. Stretch out your neck."

"Slay me quickly," Cuchulain retorted. "I did not keep you waiting last night."

The giant raised his axe till it crashed upward through the rafters of the hall, then swept it down with a crash like thunder. The men of Ulster closed their eyes in horror. But when they looked for Cuchulain, they cried out in surprise. The axe hadn't so much as scratched him. It had struck the ground instead, and the young man knelt where he was, unharmed.

The giant was no longer the giant. Smiling and leaning on his axe was none other than Curoi of Kerry.

"Rise," he told Cuchulain. "I proclaim that the Championship of the Heroes of Ireland is yours from this day forth, and the Champion's Portion at all feasts; and to your wife I adjudge the first place among all the women of Ulster. Woe to any who dares dispute this decision!"

With that, Curoi vanished. The warriors with one voice proclaimed Cuchulain as the Champion of the Heroes of all Ireland. And, as promised by Curoi of Kerry, Cuchulain kept that title for all his days.

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A Leprechaun's Gold

An Irish Folktale

Leprechauns usually stand well under 2 feet tall. While the other fairy folk find them less than handsome, leprechauns often dress in what they consider good fashion: perhaps a green jacket with silver buttons, bright blue hose, a three-cornered hat, and nicely buckled shoes. They often wear a leather apron over the lot, since leprechauns are the shoemakers for all the fairy folk of Ireland. They owe no one allegiance, though, save their own king, and prefer to live by themselves. Leprechauns are also often keepers of fairy treasure, but any human who thinks such small beings make poor guardians will soon learn otherwise.

One day a young farmer, Thomas—or Tom, as his neighbors most often called him—was walking through the fields when he heard an odd tapping sound coming from behind a hedge. Warily, Tom tiptoed forward, and his eyes grew wide with astonishment. For there, tapping away on a tiny shoe (and stopping now and then to take a drink from the jug at his side), was a small being who could be nothing else but a leprechaun. Now, Tom, being a local lad, knew all the stories about these creatures—particularly the one that said they guarded wondrous treasures.

But a leprechaun is almost impossible for a big, clumsy human to surprise. As Tom tried his best to be as stealthy as a cat, the little being looked up at him. "God bless your work," Tom said politely, trying to pretend he hadn't been about to grab the leprechaun.

"Thank you, and good day to you," the little man replied, going back to his cobbling.

Tom, trying to keep the conversation going so he might work the subject of treasure into it, asked, "May I know what's in that jug at your side?"

"Beer," the leprechaun answered. "And good beer it is. Made it myself out of the heather."

"Out of heather!" Tom said with a laugh. "There's no such thing possible!"

"Is there not? I tell you, the way of brewing such fine beer's been a family secret for longer than you could ever guess."

Could it be that maybe there was such a thing as heather beer after all? "Might I be having a taste?" Tom asked.

"I tell you, young man," the leprechaun said sternly, "you'd be better off watching your cows than begging after drink. Look, now, they're out. And they've gotten into the oats!"

Tom started to turn almost before he'd realized it—but then he remembered more about the old tales and the way leprechauns tricked unwary humans: The moment they looked away, the leprechaun would be off and away. Instead, Tom whirled, pounced like a cat on a mouse, and caught the small shoemaker in his hand.

The leprechaun squirmed something fierce, but he couldn't get free. "Hey, man, let me go!"

"Not till you show me where your treasure's hidden."

"What would you want with treasure? It's more trouble than it's worth to your kind."

"It will be trouble to you if you don't show me, and *now*!"

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"Ah, well," the leprechaun said, pathetic as a child, "there's no softening your heart of stone, is there?"

"There'll be no softening of my heart till you show me that treasure."

"So be it. Come along, young man. We have some walking to do."

Held firm in Tom's hand, the leprechaun directed him to this field and that, and finally told him, "Stop here."

"Here? But this is just a field of thistles!"

"Nevertheless, a nice fat pot of gold is buried right here. Start digging under this thistle, and you'll have your pockets full of treasure. Well, man, why are you waiting?"

How could Tom dig without a shovel? And how could he dig and not lose hold of the leprechaun? Suddenly, an idea came to him. He removed his scarf, and a nice, bright red one it was, too, and he tied it about the thick stem of the thistle.

"Now," he said, "swear to me you'll not so much as touch that thistle or that scarf."

"How could I not agree to swear it when so clever a lad holds me hostage? There; I have sworn. Now, will you not release me? I have shoes that need mending and—"

"Not yet. Swear to me you won't remove the gold this day or night."

"Och, and is he not the cleverest of men? I swear I shall not remove the gold this day or night. I shall not touch the scarf or the thistle. Now, may I kindly have my freedom?"

"You may. And good luck to you."

"Good luck to you, too, man. And much good may the gold do you when you get it."

The leprechaun vanished into the fields. Tom ran home as though devils were after him. He hunted wildly through his farming tools till he'd found a shovel and raced just as swiftly back to the field of thistles.

There Tom stopped dead, staring. Och, yes, the leprechaun had kept his word. He'd kept the very letter of his word. The thistle with the red scarf about it had not been touched at all. But each and every thistle in that entire field bore a red scarf as well. There was no telling which scarf belonged to Tom. There was no telling which was the thistle under which the gold lay!

What could Tom do? The only thing he could. He stood and laughed at the fool he'd been to think that he could ever out-trick a leprechaun.

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The Storyteller at Fault

An Irish Folktale

"The Storyteller at Fault" is an old Irish folktale, dating to at least the fourteenth century and possibly much earlier, that all storytellers can take to heart. It is about a storyteller and the problem he had in finding stories to tell.

In the ancient days of Ireland, there reigned in Leinster a king who was remarkably fond of hearing stories. Like the other princes and chieftains of the island, he had a favorite storyteller, who held a large estate from the king—which he kept only on the condition of telling the king a new story every night of his life.

Many indeed were the stories this teller knew, so that he had already reached a good old age without failing even for a single night in his task. And such was the skill he displayed that whatever cares of state or other annoyances might prey upon the monarch's mind, his storyteller was sure to send him to sleep.

One morning, the storyteller strolled out into his garden, turning over in his mind incidents that he might weave into a story for the king at night. But this morning, he found himself quite at fault; after pacing his whole estate, he returned to his house without being able to think of anything new or strange. He found no difficulty in "there was once a king who had three sons" or "one day, the king of all Ireland," but further than that he could not get.

At length, he went in to breakfast, and told his wife, "I have no mind to eat anything. For as long as I have been in the service of the king of Leinster, I never sat down to breakfast without having a new story ready for the evening, but this morning, my mind is quite shut up, and I don't know what to do. I might as well lie down and die at once. I'll be disgraced forever this evening, when the king calls for his storyteller."

Just at this moment, the lady looked out the window. There was a strange object lying in the fields. When the storyteller and his wife went to investigate, they found a miserable-looking old man lying on the ground with a wooden leg placed beside him.

"Who are you?" asked the storyteller.

"I'm but a poor, old, lame, decrepit, miserable creature, sitting down here to rest awhile and wait for someone to play a game of dice with me. I have one hundred pieces of gold in this leathern purse."

"You may as well play with him," said the storyteller's wife, "and perhaps you'll have something to tell the king in the evening."

A smooth stone was placed between them, and, upon it, they cast their throws. Soon, though, the storyteller had lost every penny.

"Will you play again?" asked the old man.

"Don't be talking, man; you have all my money."

"Haven't you chariot and horses and hounds? I'll stake all the money I have against them."

"Nonsense, man! Do you think for all the money in Ireland, I'd run the risk of seeing my lady tramp home on foot?"

"Maybe you'd win."

"Maybe I wouldn't," said the storyteller.

"Play with him, husband," said his wife. "I don't mind walking if you don't, love."

"I never refused you before," said the storyteller, "and I won't do so now." Down he sat again, and, in one throw, lost horses, hounds, and chariot.

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"Will you play again?" asked the beggar.

"Are you making game of me, man? What else have I to stake?"

"I'll stake all my winnings against your wife," said the old man.

The storyteller turned away in silence, but his wife stopped him.

"Accept his offer," said she. "This is the third time, and who knows what luck you may have? You'll surely win now."

They played again, and the storyteller lost. No sooner had he done so than to his sorrow and surprise, his wife went and sat down near the beggar.

"I'll stake the whole now, wife and all, against your own self," said the beggar.

Again they played, and again the storyteller lost. The beggar took from his pocket a long cord and a wand. "What kind of animal would you rather be, a deer, a fox, or a hare?"

The storyteller chose a hare. The beggar threw the cord round him, struck him with the wand, and, suddenly, a long-eared, frisking hare was skipping and jumping on the green. But it wasn't for long, because his wife set the hounds on him.

The hare fled; the dogs followed. Round the field ran a high wall, so that run as he might, the hare couldn't get out, and mightily diverted were beggar and lady to see him twist and double. In vain, did he take refuge with his wife; she kicked him back again to the hounds, until, at last, the beggar stopped the hounds, and with a stroke of the wand, the storyteller, panting and breathless, stood before them again.

"And how did you like the sport?" asked the beggar.

"It might be sport to others," replied the storyteller, looking at his wife. "For my part, I could well put up without. Would it be asking too much," he went on to the beggar, "to know who you are, or where you come from, or why you take pleasure in plaguing me?"

"Oh!" replied the stranger. "I'm an odd kind of good-for-little fellow, one day poor, another day rich, but if you wish to know more about me or my habits, come with me." With that, he drew out of his wallet a well-looking middle-aged man, to whom he said, "By all you heard and saw since I put you into my wallet, take charge of this lady and of the carriage and horses, and have them ready for me whenever I want them."

Suddenly, the storyteller found himself at the Foxes' Ford, near the castle of Red Hugh O'Donnell. He could see all, but none could see him.

O'Donnell was in his hall, weariness of spirit upon him. "Save you, O'Donnell," said the beggar. "For five pieces of silver you shall see a trick of mine."

"You shall have them," said O'Donnell.

The beggar placed three small straws in his hand. "The middle one," said he, "I'll blow away; the other two, I'll leave."

"You cannot do it," said one and all.

But the beggar put a finger on either outside straw and blew away the middle one.

"A good trick," said O'Donnell, and paid him his five pieces of silver.

"Six more pieces, O'Donnell, and I'll do another trick," said the beggar.

"Six you shall have."

"Do you see my two ears? One, I'll move but not the other."

"You can never move one ear and not the two together."

The beggar put his hand to one ear and gave it a pull. O'Donnell laughed and paid him the six pieces.

"Well, O'Donnell," said the beggar, "strange are the tricks I've shown you, but I'll show you a stranger one yet for the same money."

"My word on it," said O'Donnell.

With that, the beggar took a bag from under his armpit, and from out of the bag a ball of silk. He unwound the ball and flung it up into the clear blue heavens, and it became a ladder. Then, he took a hare and placed it upon the thread, and up it ran. He took out a red-eared hound, and it swiftly ran up after the hare.

"Now," said the beggar, "has anyone a mind to run after the dog?"

"I will," said a lad of O'Donnell's.

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"Up with you, then," said the juggler. "But I warn you, if you let my hare be killed, I'll cut off your head when you come down."

The lad ran up the thread, and all three soon disappeared. After looking up for a long time, the beggar said, "I'm afraid the hound is eating the hare, and that our friend has fallen asleep."

Saying this, he began to wind the thread, and down came the lad fast asleep, and down came the red-eared hound, and in his mouth was the last morsel of the hare. The beggar struck off the heads of lad and hound.

O'Donnell was sorely angered at the death of lad and hound.

"Five pieces of silver twice over for each of them," said the beggar, "and their heads shall be on them as before."

Five pieces, and again five were paid him, and, suddenly, the lad had his head and the hound his. In that instant, the gray beggar vanished.

Now, all this while, the king of Leinster's spirit was heavy. It was the time when he was used to hearing a story, but there was not a word about his storyteller.

The beggar entered, and in his hand was a three-stringed harp.

"I already have the best harpers in the five-fifths of Ireland," the king said, and he signed them to play.

"Did you ever hear the like?" he asked the beggar.

"Did you ever, O King, hear a cat purring over a bowl of broth, or the buzzing of beetles in the twilight, or a shrill-tongued old woman scolding your head off? More melodious to me were the worst of these sounds than the sweetest harping of thy harpers."

When the harpers heard this, they drew their swords and rushed at him, but instead of striking him, their blows fell on one another. When the king saw this, he thought the harpers weren't content with murdering their music, but must needs murder one another.

"Hang the fellow who began it all," he ordered, "and if I can't have a story, let me have peace."

Up came the guards, who seized the beggar, marched him to the gallows, and hanged him high. Back they marched to the hall, and who should they see but the beggar seated on a bench with a flagon of ale. Three times, they tried to hang him, and, three times, they found him sitting there in the hall.

"Are you wishing to hang me again?" he asked.

"Go where you will," said the captain, "and as fast as you please, if you'll only go far enough. It's trouble enough you've given us already."

As he said these words, the captain vanished, and the storyteller found himself on the spot where he had first met the beggar, and where his wife still was with the carriage and horses.

"Now," said the beggar, "I'll torment you no longer. There's your carriage and your horses, and your money and your wife. And as for your wife, don't think ill of her for what she did, for she couldn't help it."

"Not help it! Not help kicking me into the mouth of my own hounds! Not help casting me off for the sake of a beggarly old—"

"I'm not as beggarly or as old as ye think. I am Angus of the Bruff. Many a good turn you've done me with the king of Leinster. This morning, my magic told me the difficulty you were in, and I made up my mind to get you out of it. As for your wife there, the power that changed your body changed her mind. Forget and forgive as man and wife should do, and now you have a story for the king of Leinster when he calls for one."

With that, the beggar disappeared.

It's true enough that the storyteller now had a story fit for a king. After he'd finished telling it, the king who heard it laughed so long and hard that he couldn't go to sleep at all. And from that day on, the storyteller never had to trouble to find new stories, since every night from then on, the king listened to and laughed anew at the tale of the gray beggar.

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The Crystal Casket

An Italian Snow White Folktale

"The Crystal Casket" is a tale from Italy, first recorded in English in 1885. There is a rather disturbing necrophilic touch to it, as the king is willing to marry a corpse, but we know what the king does not—that the heroine is still alive.

There was once a widower who had a daughter between ten and twelve years old. Her father sent her to school and, as she was all alone in the world, commended her always to her teacher.

Now, the teacher, seeing that the child had no mother, fell in love with the father and kept saying to the girl, "Ask your father if he would like me for a wife."

This the teacher said to the girl every day, and at last the girl said, "Papa, the schoolmistress is always asking me if you will marry her."

The father said, "Eh! My daughter, if I take another wife, you will have great troubles."

But the girl persisted, and finally the father was persuaded to go one evening to the schoolmistress's house. When she saw him, she was well pleased, and they settled the marriage in a few days.

Poor child! How bitterly she had to repent having found a stepmother so ungrateful and cruel to her! Every day, the schoolmistress sent her stepdaughter out on a terrace to water a pot of basil, and it was so dangerous that if she fell, she would plunge into a deep river.

One day, there came a large eagle, who said to her, "What are you doing here?" The girl was weeping because she saw how great the danger was of falling into the river. The eagle said to her, "Get on my back, and I will carry you away, and you will be happier than with your new mama."

After a long journey, they reached a great plain, where they found a beautiful palace all of crystal. The eagle knocked at the door and said, "Open, my ladies, open! For I have brought you a pretty girl." When the people in the palace opened the door and saw that lovely girl, they were amazed, and they kissed and caressed her.

One day, the eagle flew away to the terrace where the stepmother was watering the basil. "Where is your daughter?" asked the eagle.

"Eh!" she replied. "Perhaps she fell from this terrace and went into the river; I have not heard from her in ten days."

The eagle answered, "What a fool you are! I carried her away; seeing that you treated her so harshly, I carried her away to my fairies, and she is very well." Then, the eagle flew away.

The stepmother, filled with rage and jealousy, called a witch from the city and said to her, "You see my daughter is alive, and she is in the house of some fairies of an eagle which often comes upon my terrace. Now, you must do me the favor to find some way to kill this stepdaughter of mine, for I am afraid that some day or other she will return, and my husband, discovering this matter, will certainly kill me."

The witch answered, "Oh, you need not be afraid of that; leave it to me."

What did the witch do? She made a little basketful of sweetmeats, in which she put poison; then she wrote a letter to the girl, pretending that it was her father who had learned where she was and wished to make her this

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present. The letter said that her father was glad to hear that she was with the fairies.

Let us leave the witch who is arranging all this deception, and return to Ermellina, for so the young girl was named. The fairies said to her, “See, Ermellina, we are going away, and shall be absent four days. Now, in this time take good care not to open the door to anyone, for some treachery is being prepared for you by your stepmother.”

She promised to open the door to no one. “Do not be anxious,” she said. “I am well off, and my stepmother has nothing to do with me.”

But it was not so. The fairies went away, and, the next day when Ermellina was alone, she heard a knocking at the door. She said to herself, “Knock away! I don’t open to anyone.”

But meanwhile, the blows redoubled, and curiosity forced her to look out the window. What did she see? She saw one of the servant girls of her own home (for the witch had disguised herself as one of her father’s servants).

“O my dear Ermellina,” the servant said, “your father is shedding tears of sorrow for you, because he really believed you were dead, but the eagle that carried you off came and told him the good news that you were here with the fairies. Meanwhile, your father, not knowing what civility to show you, for he understands very well that you are in need of nothing, has thought to send you this little basket of sweetmeats.”

At first, Ermellina did not open the door; the servant begged her to come down and take the basket and the letter, but she said, “No, I wish nothing!” Finally, though, since women, and especially young girls, are fond of sweetmeats, Ermellina descended and opened the door.

When the witch, disguised as the servant, had given Ermellina the basket, she said, “Eat this,” and broke off for her a piece of the sweetmeats, which she had poisoned. When Ermellina took the first mouthful, the old woman, in the form of the servant girl, disappeared. Ermellina had scarcely time to close the door before she fell down on the stairs.

When the fairies returned, they knocked at the door, but no one opened it for them; then, they perceived that there had been some treachery and began to weep. The chief of the fairies said, “We must break open the door,” and so they did, and saw Ermellina dead on the stairs.

Her other friends who loved her so dearly begged the chief of the fairies to bring her to life, but she would not, “for,” she said, “she has disobeyed me.” But one and the other asked her until she consented. She opened Ermellina’s mouth, took out a piece of the sweetmeat that the girl had not yet swallowed, and raised her up, and Ermellina came to life again.

We can imagine what a pleasure it was for her friends; but the chief of the fairies reproved her for her disobedience. Ermellina promised not to disobey the fairies again.

Once more, the fairies were obliged to depart. Their chief said, “Remember, Ermellina: The first time I cured you, but the second I will have nothing to do with you.”

Ermellina said they need not worry, that she would not open the door to anyone. But it was not so; for the eagle, thinking to increase her stepmother’s anger, told her again that Ermellina was alive. The stepmother denied it all to the eagle, but she summoned anew the witch and told her that her stepdaughter was still alive, saying, “Either you will really kill her, or I will be avenged on you.”

The old witch, finding herself caught, told her to buy a very handsome dress, one of the handsomest she could find. The witch transformed herself into a tailor belonging to the family, took the dress, departed, and went to poor Ermellina. The witch knocked at the door and said, “Open, open, for I am your tailor. Come down; I must fit a dress on you.”

Ermellina replied, “No, no, for I have been deceived once.”

“But I am not the old woman,” replied the tailor. “You know me, for I have always made your dresses.”

Poor Ermellina was persuaded and descended the stairs; the tailor took to flight and disappeared while Ermellina was yet buttoning

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up the dress. Ermellina closed the door and was mounting the stairs, but she was not permitted to go up, for she fell down dead.

Let us return to the fairies, who came home and knocked at the door. But what good did it do to knock? There was no longer anyone there. They began to weep. The chief of the fairies said, "I told you that she would betray me again; but now, I will have nothing more to do with her."

So they broke open the door and saw the poor girl with the beautiful dress on, but she was dead. They all wept, because they really loved her. But there was nothing to do.

The chief of the fairies struck her enchanted wand and commanded a beautiful rich casket all covered with diamonds and other precious stones to appear; then the others made a beautiful garland of flowers and gold, put it on the young girl, and then laid her in the casket, which was so rich and beautiful that it was marvelous to behold. Then the old fairy struck her wand as usual and commanded a handsome horse, the likes of which not even the king possessed. Then they took the casket, put it on the horse's back, and led him into the public square of the city, and the chief of the fairies said, "Go, and do not stop until you find someone who says to you, 'Stop, for pity's sake, for I have lost my horse for you.' "

Now let us leave the afflicted fairies and turn our attention to the horse, which ran away at full speed. Who happened to pass at that moment? None other than a king saw this horse with that wonder on its back. Then, the king began to spur his horse, and he rode him so hard that he killed him and had to leave him dead in the road; but the king kept running after the other horse. The poor king could endure it no longer; he saw himself lost, and exclaimed, "Stop, for pity's sake, for I have lost my horse for you!"

Then the horse stopped (for those were the words). When the king saw that beautiful girl dead in the casket, he thought no more about his own horse, but took the other to the city. The king's mother knew that her son had gone hunting; when she saw him returning with this loaded horse, she did not know what to think. The son had no father, wherefore he was all-powerful.

The king reached the palace and had the horse unloaded and the casket carried to his chamber; then, he called his mother and said, "Mother, I went hunting, but I have found a wife."

"But what is it? A doll? A dead woman?"

"Mother," replied her son, "don't trouble yourself about what it is; it is my wife."

His mother began to laugh, and withdrew to her own room. (What could she do, poor mother?)

Now, this poor king no longer went hunting, took no diversion, did not even go to the table, but ate in his own room. By a fatality, it happened that war was declared against him, and he was obliged to depart.

He called his mother, and said, "Mother, I wish two careful chambermaids, whose business it shall be to guard this casket, for if on my return I find that anything has happened to my casket, I shall have the chambermaids killed."

His mother, who loved him, said, "Go, my son; fear nothing, for I myself will watch over your casket."

He wept several days at being obliged to abandon this treasure of his, but there was no help for it; he had to go. After his departure, he did nothing but commend his wife (so he called her) to his mother in his letters.

Let us return to the mother, who no longer thought about the matter, not even to have the casket dusted. But all at once, there came a letter that informed her that the king had been victorious and would return to his palace in a few days. The mother called the chambermaids and said to them, "Girls, we are ruined."

They replied, "Why, Highness?"

"Because my son will be back in a few days, and how have we taken care of the doll?"

They answered, "True, true; now let us go and wash the doll's face."

They went to the king's room and saw that the doll's face and hands were covered with dust and fly specks, so they took a sponge and

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washed her face, but some drops of water fell on her dress and spotted it. The poor chambermaids began to weep, and went to the queen for advice.

The queen said, “Do you know what to do? Call a tailor, and have a dress precisely like this brought, and take off this one before my son comes.”

They did so, and the chambermaids went to the room and began to unbutton the dress. The moment that they took off the first sleeve, Ermellina opened her eyes. The poor chambermaids sprang up in terror, but one of the most courageous said, “I am a woman, and so is this one; she will not eat me.”

To cut the matter short, the chambermaid took off the dress; when it was removed, Ermellina began to get out of the casket to walk about and see where she was. The chambermaids fell on their knees before her and begged her to tell them who she was. She, poor girl, told them the whole story. Then she said, “I wish to know where I am.”

Then, the chambermaids called the king’s mother to explain it to her. The mother did not fail to tell her everything, and she, poor girl, did nothing but weep penitently, thinking of what the fairies had done for her.

The king was on the point of arriving, and his mother said to the girl-doll, “Come here; put on one of my best dresses.” In short, she arrayed her like a queen.

Then came her son. They shut the doll up in a small room so that she could not be seen. The king came with great joy, with trumpets blowing and banners flying for the victory. But he took no interest in all this, and ran at once to his room to see the doll; the chambermaids fell on their knees before him, saying that the doll smelled so badly that they could not stay in the palace, and they were obliged to bury her.

The king would not listen to this excuse, but at once called two of the palace servants to erect the gallows. His mother comforted him in vain: “My son, it was a dead woman.”

“No, no; I will not listen to any reasons. Dead or alive, you should have left it for me.”

Finally, when his mother saw that he was in earnest about the gallows, she rang a little bell, and there came forth no longer the doll, but a very beautiful girl, whose like was never seen. The king was amazed, and said, “What is this?”

Then his mother, the chambermaids, and Ermellina were obliged to tell him all that had happened.

He said, “Mother, since I adored her when dead and called her my wife, now I mean her to be my wife in truth.”

“Yes, my son,” replied his mother. “Do so, for I am willing.”

They arranged the wedding, and, in a few days, the two were man and wife.

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Appointment in Samarra

A Folktale from the Talmud, the Jewish Book of Religious Wisdom

"Appointment in Samarra" refers to a type of Jewish folktale in which a man or group of men flee death only to die in the new location. This, it turns out, is the place in which they were destined to die.

There were two Cushites, called Elichoreph and Achiyah, who attended King Solomon. They were sons of Shisha, the scribes of Solomon.

One day, Solomon noticed that the Angel of Death looked sad. Solomon asked him, "Why are you sad?"

The angel replied. "Because they have demanded from me the two Cushites that dwell here."

Solomon had demons take Elichoreph and Achiyah to the city of Luz, which was a legendary city where no one ever died. However, as soon as they reached the gates of Luz, they died.

The next day, Solomon noticed that the Angel of Death was happy. He asked him, "Why are you so happy?"

The angel replied, "Because you sent them to the very place where they were supposed to die."

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The Golem of Prague

A Jewish Folktale

Although Jewish folk stories of artificial life date back as far as the Talmud, about 600 C.E., the tales of golems began to be told in Jewish communities during the time of Christian persecution of Jews in the Middle Ages. This was particularly so in Prague, when anti-Semitic sentiment grew so powerful that Jews finally fled the city.

Once, long ago in the city of Prague, there were people who hated the Jews who lived in that city. Why? Jews and Christians both worship the same God, but they worship in different ways. Those wicked people hated the Jews just because they weren't Christians. And so they began to spread terrible rumors that the Jews of Prague were murdering Christian children. Of course, this wasn't true, but when people are afraid, they believe even the strangest rumors.

The chief rabbi of Prague, a wise and wonderworking man known as the Maharal, was worried for his congregation. Surely, it was just a matter of time before fear turned to violence. Surely, the Jews needed a guardian!

So the holy Maharal went down to the river with two apprentices. Out of the clay of the river's bank, they formed the figure of a gigantic man. The Maharal spoke words from the Holy Scriptures over it, and the clay figure, the golem, opened his eyes.

"Stand," the Maharal told him.

The golem stood. The three men dressed him and took him back with them to Prague.

"But—but we can't tell anyone what he really is!" one apprentice said. "People would think he was a monster."

"No one shall know," the Maharal agreed. He told the golem, "You are Joseph. And you will serve me, even if I tell you to jump into fire."

The golem, being only a thing of clay, could not speak, but he nodded obediently.

The Maharal added firmly, "Your purpose in being is to protect the Jews of Prague from harm."

Again, the golem nodded obediently.

The Maharal brought the golem to his home, where everyone took Joseph to be no more than a poor, weak-witted servant. Even the Maharal's own wife, Perele, believed it.

One day, Perele asked Joseph to fill the water barrels—but she forgot to tell him to stop! The golem kept on bringing bucket after bucket of water, till the Maharal's house was nearly flooded.

"Why do you keep such a foolish servant?" Perele angrily asked her husband.

"He will prove his worth," the Maharal assured her.

And, of course, the Maharal was right. When evil men threatened the Jews, Joseph patrolled the streets like a huge, silent soldier. Again and again, he saved the Jews from anyone who tried to hurt them.

The people who hated the Jews were furious. They would not let any huge, silent soldier stop them! So they decided on a terribly cruel plot. They went to the Christian cemetery and dug up the body of a boy.

"We'll hide it in the home of the Maharal himself," they decided. "Then, we will call in the guards. Everyone will believe the Jews

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have been murdering Christian children, and that will be the end of the Jews of Prague!"

But even as they plotted, not one of those hate-filled people realized that Joseph was following them like a giant silent shadow. Just before they were about to throw the boy's body into the Maharal's house, the golem caught them. He scooped them all up in his mighty arms, carried them to the house of the city's watchman, and dropped them all right in the courtyard.

The noise woke the watchman and his neighbors. They came running and found the grave robbers and the boy's body. Once the watchman learned of the plot, he hurried to the palace to tell Prague's ruler, King Rudolf.

"What a horrible thing!" the king exclaimed. "But how fortunate we all are that these cruel people were stopped in time!"

And he issued a royal decree on the spot: On pain of banishment, none of his people should ever again spread rumors about the Jews.

Life grew peaceful for the Jews of Prague after that. When a whole year had passed without trouble, the Maharal knew the golem was no longer needed. He led Joseph to the attic, where the Maharal and his apprentice spoke holy and magical words over him.

When they were finished, the golem was no more than lifeless clay. The Maharal hid the clay under a pile of papers and books.

"Sleep well, Joseph," he murmured.

And who knows? For all anyone can tell, the golem is sleeping there still, waiting for the time when he will be needed once more.

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King Solomon and the Demon

A Jewish Folktale

The historical King Solomon lived in and ruled the biblical land of Israel around 900 B.C.E. He was known for his wisdom, and this trait became part of folk belief. Later folktales claimed that Solomon could control all manner of magic beings, including demons.

King Solomon, ruler of the land of Israel, was, as is well known, the wisest of men, ruler of humankind, and master of spirits and demons. He was also a pious man and had determined to build a temple to the glory of God.

But the king remembered the holy words that said that no altar may be built of hewn stone. For stone is hewn by iron, symbolic of the sword, and the touch of a metal of war on a building of peace would be sure desecration.

Then how could a temple be built? Solomon the Wise pondered this problem, and, at last, he found a solution: the shamir. This creature, the diamond insect, was tiny but incredibly strong, and it could surely hew stones and split mighty trees for the temple's walls and roof beams.

Ah, but where was the shamir to be found? That was an even greater problem, and one that even Solomon the Wise could not solve. So the king, alone in his chambers, held out his hand that bore a signet ring engraved with the holy name. No sooner had he proclaimed that name than a demon appeared, kneeling before the king and trembling.

"What is your will, oh wisest of kings?"

King Solomon gestured to the demon to stand. "I command you to tell me where the shamir may be found."

But the demon only trembled the more. "Mighty king, don't be angry. I am your servant; I do not wish to disobey. But I don't have an answer for you. Only our own king, Ashmodai, has the knowledge you seek."

"And where," the king asked sternly, "is Ashmodai, king of demons, to be found?"

"Far from here, mighty king; far from the homes of men. His palace stands on the very top of a towering mountain. In that mountain is a wonderful well, guarded jealously by Ashmodai. When he is not at home, he keeps the opening to that well carefully closed with a great rock sealed with the touch of his signet ring. Whenever Ashmodai returns, he first examines the seal on the rock to be sure no one has tampered with it, then he drinks deeply of the pure water and seals the well anew."

Not a word of this did Solomon the Wise forget. He dismissed the demon, then summoned Benaiah, son of Jebodiah, the captain of the royal guard. "I wish you to capture Ashmodai, king of demons, and bring him to me."

The king gave Benaiah a golden chain inscribed with the holy name and a sack of the strongest wine, and he lent him his royal signet ring as well. Off the brave warrior went, traveling through the desert waste, climbing the harsh, terrifying height of Ashmodai's mountain, fearing nothing, since he bore King Solomon's signet ring with the holy name upon it.

Benaiah grinned with relief. Ashmodai was not at home. Now, he had a chance to

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perform the king's plan. There was the well, blocked with the rock and sealed with Ashmodai's seal. Benaiah didn't try to move the massive rock, but he bore a small hole through it. And through that hole, Benaiah poured the whole sackful of that strongest wine.

Sure enough, when Ashmodai returned, tall and terrible, with great, blazing eyes, he went straight for the well. Never noticing the tiny hole in the rock, he opened the well and drank deeply. Demons are unfamiliar with wine—and this was, after all, the strongest wine—and very soon Ashmodai was sound asleep. Benaiah crept forward and bound the demon in the golden chain, then waited.

At last, Ashmodai yawned and woke. Finding himself bound, he fought to free himself, but no demon could break a chain marked with the holy name.

"Come," Benaiah said, "we are going to King Solomon, he who is your master."

Ashmodai gave no argument. But strange incidents happened along the way. Once, he saw a happy bridal party and began to weep.

"Monster!" Benaiah cried. "Why do you weep at the happiness of others?"

"I weep because I see the future; the groom will be dead within three days."

They went on, and they overheard a man insisting that the boot maker make him shoes to last at least seven years. Ashmodai burst into laughter.

"Why do you laugh?" Benaiah asked.

"That foolish man will not live seven days longer, yet he wishes shoes that will outlive him by seven years!"

Benaiah, sharply reminded that his companion was, after all, a demon who could not see things as did humans, said nothing.

Many other strange events befell them, but, at last, Ashmodai stood before King Solomon. The demon shivered at the sight of the ruler of all spirits and demons, then threw down a long staff before the king.

Solomon never flinched. "What does this mean?"

"With all your majesty, mighty king, after your death you will own no more space in the earth than is measured by that staff. Yet you would rule not just your own kind but spirits and demons as well!"

"Control your anger," Solomon said mildly. "I seek only the smallest of services from you. I wish to build a temple to the glory of God—ah, yes, demon; tremble at that—and I need to find the shamir."

"I have it not!"

"Gently, Ashmodai. Who does?"

"Mighty king, it was the shamir that was used to carve the two tablets borne by Moses. But since that day, the shamir has been in the care of the prince of the sea, who has placed it under the guardianship of the woodcock. The woodcock lives in its nest on a mountain peak and keeps the shamir ever with it, tucked under one wing."

"So be it," the king said. "You shall bide here, Ashmodai, till the temple is built."

He summoned Benaiah. "I have a second task for you, brave captain. You must find the shamir in the nest of the woodcock of the mountain peak and bring it back with you. Take this with you."

He gave Benaiah a sturdy lead-lined box and a thick pane of glass and told him how to use them. Off Benaiah went to the mountain, hunting till he found the woodcock's nest. The woodcock was away, but there in the nest, as Solomon had known there would be, were several of the bird's fledglings. Benaiah quickly covered the nest with the thick pane of glass, then hid and waited for the woodcock to return.

Here the bird came. It saw the glass and its fledglings trapped underneath and began to shriek, flapping its wings, clawing at the glass, and beating at it with its beak. But the glass would not break. The fledglings remained trapped. At last, the woodcock took the shamir, the diamond insect, from under its wing. The moment that the shamir touched the glass, the glass fell apart into two pieces.

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"Oh, wonderful!" cried Benaiah, and he leaped out of hiding. He quickly slipped the shamir into the lead-lined box and returned all that long way to King Solomon.

And so it was that with the help of the magical shamir, the diamond insect, the holy temple was built. And Solomon the Wise released Ashmodai as he had promised.

As for the shamir—the moment that Solomon's temple to the glory of God was finished, the shamir vanished. And, to this day, no one has seen the shamir again.

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No Escape from Fate

A Persian Folktale

"No Escape from Fate" is a familiar folktale about the inevitability of destiny, a variant on the "Appointment in Samarra" theme, possibly dating from ninth-century Persia. It still has quite an ironic impact, particularly since the city of Samarra was the scene of some fighting during the Iraq War, begun in 2003, and so many foreign soldiers traveled to Iraq to fight and met their deaths there.

Many years ago, there was a man in Bathsheba who asked his servant to go to the market. The servant went to the market, and among the throng he saw Death. Death made a gesture, and the servant grew frightened and ran home to his master.

The servant said, "Master, today I saw Death in the market amid the throng. And he made a threatening gesture to me. Master, I shall make haste, and I shall ride like the wind to Samarra, for Samarra is many miles from here, and Death will not find me there."

So the servant rode away to Samarra, and his master was sorely troubled. He went to the market, and he sought out Death. And the master said to Death, "Why did you make a threatening gesture at my servant? He has done me good service and is old in years."

And Death replied, "I made no threatening gesture at your servant. That was a start of surprise. For I saw him this morning in Bathsheba, but this night I was to meet him many miles away in Samarra."

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Koschei the Deathless

A Russian Folktale

Koschei is a powerful figure in Russian folklore, immortal because he has hidden his life force outside of his body. There is scant evidence about his origins, whether or not he was originally a dark deity, but he always is portrayed in stories or paintings as a sinister figure, either as an old, gaunt man or as a skeletal figure.

Once there was a king with but one child, a son named Ivan. As Ivan grew, his nurse sang magical songs to him. Among them was one that she sang over and over till he knew it would be his destiny:

"Prince Ivan, when you are grown, you shall seek a bride. Beyond three times nine kingdoms she lives, and Princess Vasilisa is she called."

So it was that Prince Ivan, when he had grown into a fine young man, rode off to find his promised bride. But as he traveled beyond three times nine kingdoms, he came to a city where a man was being flogged. This was a poor man who could not repay a small loan. But when Prince Ivan tried to repay it for him, the prince was warned, "He who settles this loan will have his wife stolen by Koschei the Deathless."

"I have no wife," Prince Ivan said truthfully, and he settled the loan.

Then the prince went on his way. And, at last, weary but full of hope, he reached the last of the kingdoms. There was Princess Vasilisa in her castle tower. She, too, had heard songs, but hers had been about her promised groom. He looked at her, she looked at him, and they swore their vows there and then.

But as soon as they had, Koschei the Deathless came swooping down like a great black cloud. Before Prince Ivan could even draw his sword, Koschei had carried the princess away.

Prince Ivan rode in search of Koschei's lands. He rode high, he rode low, and, at last, he came to Koschei's castle, there at the end of Nowhere. Koschei the Deathless was away at the hunt, and Ivan stole inside. Princess Vasilisa was there, but there was no way to steal her away again.

"And Koschei cannot be slain like mortal men!" she warned Ivan. "You must hide, and I will try to trick the truth from him."

So Ivan hid. Koschei came swooping in, now seeming to be a skeleton, now an ancient man, and now like nothing but darkness. "A mortal man has been here!" he shouted. "I smell him!"

"You were hunting mortal men," Princess Vasilisa answered. "Their smell is still in your nostrils."

Koschei threw himself down to rest. Vasilisa petted his head and stroked it, as though she were pleased he had returned. "I was so worried," she said. "I feared you would never return. I feared a wild beast had slain you."

Koschei laughed. "Foolish woman! Do you think mere beasts could devour me? My life and death lie in that broom by the door."

When he left, Ivan raced to the broom. Bah, no, it was nothing but a broom, with no magic about it.

When Koschei returned, he found that Vasilisa had gilded the broom and placed it on the table. "What is this?"

"Oh, I could not leave your life and death to lie on the floor!"

Koschei laughed. "Foolish woman! Do you think my death is here? My life and death lie in that goat at the window."

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As soon as he left, Ivan raced to the goat. Bah, no, it was nothing but an animal, with no magic about it.

When Koschei returned, he found that Vasilisa had combed the goat's hair and woven golden ribbons in its horns. "What is this?"

"Oh, I could not let your life and death sit in a plain old goat!"

Koschei laughed. "Foolish woman! My death is far away. In the sea, there sits an island, and, on that island, there stands an oak. Under the oak is a chest. In the chest is a hare. In the hare is a duck. In the duck is an egg. And in the egg lies my heart."

Prince Ivan rode off to find Koschei's heart. On the way, he saved a dog from drowning. "Thank you!" the dog said. "I will come when you need aid."

Prince Ivan rode on. He saved an eagle from a net. "Thank you!" the eagle said. "I will come when you need aid."

Prince Ivan rode on. He saved a lobster that was stranded on the shore. "Thank you!" the lobster said. "I will come when you need aid."

At last, Prince Ivan reached the island. There stood the oak. Prince Ivan dug and dug at its roots. Here was the buried chest! He opened it carefully—but the hare sprang out and raced away.

"Dog I saved!" Prince Ivan cried. "Catch that hare!"

The dog appeared and caught the hare.

Ivan carefully cut open the hare—but the duck leaped out and flapped away.

"Eagle I saved!" Prince Ivan cried. "Catch that duck!"

The eagle appeared and caught the duck.

Ivan carefully cut open the duck—but the egg rolled out and fell into the sea.

"Lobster I saved!" Prince Ivan cried. "Catch that egg!"

The lobster caught the egg in a claw and brought it to Ivan.

"Thank you, my friends," Ivan cried, and he rode back to Koschei's castle.

Koschei the Deathless stormed outside, dragging Vasilisa with him. "I smell a mortal man!" he roared. "You shall die!"

"Not today!" Prince Ivan cried.

He sprang at Koschei and struck him on the head with the egg. The egg shattered, and with it, Koschei's heart shattered as well. Without a word, the monster fell down dead.

And Prince Ivan and Princess Vasilisa rode off together to their wedding. We were there, we ate, we drank, and we were joyous.

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Gold-Tree and Silver-Tree

A Scottish Snow White Folktale

Storytellers and others may be surprised to learn that Snow White has a good many "sisters," the central characters in folk stories from around the world that tell the same basic tale. "Gold-Tree and Silver-Tree," a version from Scotland, was published by Joseph Jacobs in his *Celtic Tales* (1892).

Notice that this version depicts a clear mother–daughter rivalry, rather than a conflict between stepmother and stepdaughter. Also note the odd addition of the two wives. Folklorists have debated whether that element dates back to a time of polygamy, or whether the nameless storyteller who added that detail simply forgot that there already was a wife in the story and could not figure out how to eliminate the second one.

Once upon a time there was a king who had a wife, called Silver-Tree, and a daughter, whose name was Gold-Tree. On a certain day of the days, Gold-Tree and Silver-Tree went to a glen where there was a well, and in it there was a trout.

Said Silver-Tree, "Troutie, bonny little fellow, am not I the most beautiful queen in the world?"

"Oh! Indeed you are not."

"Who, then?"

"Why, Gold-Tree, your daughter."

Silver-Tree went home blind with rage. She lay down on the bed and vowed she would never be well until she could get the heart and the liver of her daughter to eat.

At nightfall, the king came home, and he was told that Silver-Tree was very ill. He went where she was and asked her what was wrong with her.

"Oh! Only a thing which you may heal if you like."

"Oh! Indeed there is nothing at all that I could do for you that I would not do."

"If I get the heart and the liver of Gold-Tree, my daughter, to eat, I shall be well."

Now, it happened that about this time the son of a great king had come from abroad to ask Gold-Tree for marrying. The king now agreed to this, and the couple went abroad.

The king then went and sent his lads to the hunting hill for a he-goat; he gave its heart and its liver to his wife to eat, and she rose well and healthy.

A year after this, Silver-Tree went to the glen where there was the well in which there was the trout.

"Troutie, bonny little fellow," said she, "am not I the most beautiful queen in the world?"

"Oh! Indeed you are not."

"Who, then?"

"Why, Gold-Tree, your daughter."

"Oh! Well, it is long since she was living. It is a year since I ate her heart and liver."

"Oh! Indeed she is not dead. She is married to a great prince abroad."

Silver-Tree went home and begged the king to put the long ship in order. She said, "I am going to see my dear Gold-Tree, for it is so long since I have seen her." The long ship was put in order, and they went away.

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Silver-Tree herself was at the helm, and she steered the ship so well that they were not long at all before they arrived.

The prince was out hunting on the hills. Gold-Tree recognized the long ship of her father approaching.

"Oh!" said she to the servants, "my mother is coming, and she will kill me."

"She shall not kill you at all; we will lock you in a room where she cannot get near you."

This is how it was done, and when Silver-Tree came ashore, she began to cry out, "Come to meet your own mother when she comes to see you."

Gold-Tree said that she could not, that she was locked in the room, and that she could not get out of it.

"Will you not put out your little finger through the keyhole, so that your own mother may give a kiss to it?" asked Silver-Tree.

Gold-Tree put out her little finger, Silver-Tree stuck it with a poisoned stab, and Gold-Tree fell dead.

When the prince came home and found Gold-Tree dead, he was in great sorrow, and when he saw how beautiful she was, he did not bury her at all, but he locked her in a room where nobody would get near her.

In the course of time he married again, and the whole house was under the hand of his wife but one room, and he himself always kept the key to that room. On a certain day of the days, he forgot to take the key with him, and the second wife got into the room. What did she see there but the most beautiful woman that she had ever seen. She began to turn and try to wake her, and she noticed the poisoned stab in her finger. She took the stab out, and Gold-Tree rose alive, as beautiful as she had ever been.

At the fall of night, the prince came home from the hunting hill looking very downcast.

"What gift," said his wife, "would you give me if I could make you laugh?"

"Oh! Indeed, nothing could make me laugh, except were Gold-Tree to come alive again."

"Well, you'll find her alive down there in the room."

When the prince saw Gold-Tree alive, he made great rejoicings, and he began to kiss her, and kiss her, and kiss her.

Said the second wife, "Since she is the first one you had, it is better for you to stick to her, and I will go away."

"Oh! Indeed you shall not go away, but I shall have both of you."

At the end of the year, Silver-Tree went to the glen where there was the well in which there was the trout.

"Troutie, bonny little fellow," said she, "am not I the most beautiful queen in the world?"

"Oh! Indeed you are not."

"Who, then?"

"Why, Gold-Tree, your daughter."

"Oh! Well, she is not alive. It is a year since I put the poisoned stab into her finger."

"Oh! Indeed, she is not dead at all, at all."

Silver-Tree went home and begged the king to put the long ship in order, because she was going to see her dear Gold-Tree, as it was so long since she had seen her. The long ship was put in order, and they went away.

Again, it was Silver-Tree herself who was at the helm, and she steered the ship so well that they were not long at all before they arrived.

The prince was out hunting on the hills. Gold-Tree recognized her father's ship approaching.

"Oh!" said she, "my mother is coming, and she will kill me."

"Not at all," said the second wife; "we will go down to meet her."

Silver-Tree came ashore. "Come down, Gold-Tree, love," said she, "for your own mother has come to you with a precious drink."

"It is a custom in this country," said the second wife, "that the person who offers a drink takes a draught out of it first."

Silver-Tree put her mouth to it, and the second wife went and struck it so that some of it went down her throat, and she fell dead. They had only to carry her home a dead corpse and bury her.

The prince and his two wives were long alive after this, pleased and peaceful.

I left them there.

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Geser

A Folktale of the Culture Hero of Tibet

Geser is the culture hero of Tibet, with so many tales in his collective epic that they would fill several volumes. Even in modern times, the tales of Geser remain popular, as much in defiance of Chinese occupation as a way to keep Tibet's culture alive.

In the very earliest times, in the upper world there were the fifty-five *tenger,* the divine spirits of the western direction, and the forty-four tenger of the eastern direction.

The leader of the western tenger was Han Hormasta, and the leader of the eastern tenger was Atai Ulaan. There was such anger between them that at last they fought. Han Hormasta won, tearing Atai Ulaan to bits. But when the pieces drifted down to Earth, they turned into evil spirits and disease.

Soon, the people were in despair. There was a powerful female shaman, Sharnaihan Shara, who threw her drumstick to the sky with such magical force that it landed on the table of Manzan Gurme Toodei, mother of all the sky spirits. Manzan Gurme Toodei took out her shaman mirror and saw the perils from evil and disease that faced humanity. She called a meeting of the tenger to decide how to save the people.

Han Hormasta had three sons. He decided to send the middle one, Bukhe Beligte, down to Earth. Reborn as a human, he would become the protector of the people.

Meanwhile, on Earth, there lived a poor husband and wife named Sengelen Noyon and Naran Goohon. They had no dog, no livestock, and practically no possessions, and they survived by gathering wild onions and garlic, netting small fish, and catching rabbits with snares. But despite their poverty, they were overjoyed when Naran Goohon found that she would have a child.

Soon after the baby was born, he lifted his right hand as though about to strike someone, bent his left leg, then looked at his parents with his right eye wide open and his left eye squinted. To his parents' amazement, the baby spoke.

"I hold up my right hand to show that I will always strike my enemies. I bend my left leg to show that I will always kick my enemies. My open right eye shows that I will always see the right path. My squinted left eye shows that I will always see through deceit."

Thus was Bukhe Beligte reborn as a human being.

Meanwhile, the evil spirits had discovered this fact. Meeting in their barren, sunless home, they plotted to kill the newborn child. They sent a giant rat with a bronze muzzle to kill him. But the baby struck the rat so hard that it shattered into ninety mice.

Then, the evil spirits sent a raven with an iron beak and claws to kill the baby. The baby smashed the raven into bits and threw the bits all the way back to where the evil spirits were meeting.

Last, the evil spirits sent a mosquito as large as a horse to kill the baby. The baby cried, "Be forever hungry and fly among the grass!" and struck it so hard that the giant mosquito shattered into a cloud of gnats.

The evil spirits were stunned. Their enemy had destroyed three monsters—and he was still just a baby!

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So they went to their foul leader and cried, “Oh most powerful evil one, a magical boy has been born. We need to kill him, smash him, crush him!”

“I shall do this,” their leader snapped.

He took on the guise of a human shaman and appeared before Sengelen Noyon and his wife. “I am a shaman who has come to help and protect your new son.”

But as soon as the baby saw who had entered, he started screaming.

The shaman said, “Why is the boy making so much noise? Is he ill?”

He approached the cradle, ready to snatch up the baby. But as soon as he grew near, his disguise vanished. The hideous creature gnashed his iron fangs and roared, “I shall cut off your life and eat your soul!”

The baby simply grabbed the iron muzzle of the monster and kicked out so hard that the evil thing’s head flew off.

The evil spirits left the baby alone after that.

The young hero grew rapidly—as much in a day as ordinary children grew in a year. He was never ill and never tired, and he played happily every day.

One day, Sengelen Noyon’s older brother came to visit. When he saw that they had a child, he was very happy. “But the boy needs playmates,” he said. “Let me take this child with me so that he can grow up and play with my own two sons.”

The boy’s parents agreed.

When Sargal Noyon got home, he held a feast to celebrate the boy’s arrival. He told his guests, “Up to this time this boy has had no name. To whomever gives him a name, I will give meat and fat in exchange.”

An old man leaning on a walking stick said, “The boy is sweaty and muddy. Why not call him Nuhata Nurgai, Slimy Face?”

Everybody laughed. It was a silly name, a perfect name for a boy who had not yet earned an adult name. And so it was that the newly named Nuhata Nurgai watched Sargal Noyon’s animals and played with Sargal Noyon’s own sons, Altan Shagai and Mungun Shagai. They were older than the boy, and were forever trying his strength and the quickness of his mind. But Nuhata Nurgai never failed. He grew and thrived.

Now, the ruler of the northwestern lands, Temeen Ulaan, had a beautiful daughter, Tumen Jargalan. He announced that he would give his daughter in marriage to any man who was able to win three contests of strength. Warriors came from far and wide for the contest. Nuhata Nurgai also was there, wearing old clothes and riding a mouse brown colt.

Then the contests began. For the first, Nuhata Nurgai picked up a boulder and threw it so hard that it shattered into flints. For the second, he uprooted a pine tree and threw it so hard that it shattered into splinters. For the third, he pulled up an ephedra bush and threw it so far that no one could see it land.

No one else could match him, and so Nuhata Nurgai took Tumen Jargalan home as his wife. But he left behind a jealous rival, his uncle Hara Zutan, who hated him from that moment on.

Soon after returning home, Nuhata Nurgai set out again, riding his mouse brown colt. He reached a country where the ruler, Shaazgai Bayan, was promising to give his daughter in marriage to any man who could defeat a giant warrior.

The giant had a powerful body, with a chest as wide as the sea. His armor was of black forged iron, his bow was the trunk of a tree, and his quiver was made of planks. But Nuhata Nurgai dodged his arrows, caught him up, and threw him out of sight. He took Shaazgai Bayan’s daughter, Urmai Goohon, back to his home, and as the custom was for their people, she became his second wife.

Tumen Jargalan and Urmai Goohon got along well together. But they could not understand why Nuhata Nurgai seemed to want the three of them to have a very dull life together. They didn’t know that their husband was only waiting for the right time.

And then, one night Nuhata Nurgai climbed to the summit of Mount Sumber and performed a ritual to honor the tengers. Then

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and there, he changed into his true form as Bukhe Beligte, with a warrior's strong face and body, blazing eyes, and long black hair.

Looking down from the upper world, Han Hormasta saw his son and nodded. He was ready. So Han Hormasta sent down a warrior's horse and equipment. The horse was a bay, with hooves like iron and legs that would never tire. Lightning glittered in its eyes, and its name was Beligen, which means "gift."

The warrior, who was now known as Geser, grabbed the red reins of the horse, put his feet into the silver stirrups, sat upon the silver saddle, and rode down into the world.

Sengelen Noyon and Naran Goohon rejoiced to know they had borne such a heroic son, and Tumen Jargalan and Urmai Goohon rejoiced to realize they were married to such a handsome warrior.

One day, Geser went hunting in the Altai Mountains. After three days of hunting, he had not found a single deer. On the fourth day, he saw a spotted deer running in the forest and followed it. Just as he was about to shoot, a young man on a chestnut horse dashed out of the forest, shot the deer, swung it up on his horse, and galloped away.

Geser rode after him, angry at losing the deer. They came to the shores of Lake Baikal, but the young man never stopped. He rode his horse right into the water and disappeared.

Geser left his horse and warily followed, down into the land of Uha Loson, chief of the water spirits. The rider of the chestnut horse was none other than the chief's daughter, Alma Mergen, who had disguised herself as a young man while hunting. Uha Loson was delighted to see Geser, because he had known Geser's father, Han Hormasta, quite well. The two men had once agreed that their children would be married. According to this custom, Alma Mergen became Geser's third wife.

Geser and Alma Mergen rode to his home, where he built three houses for his three wives. All was happiness for a time. Geser would say to his family, "Is the Sun in the sky beautiful, or is Tumen Jargalan beautiful? Is the Sun in the heavens beautiful, or is Urmai Goohon beautiful? Is the golden Sun beautiful, or is Alma Mergen beautiful?"

But life could not stay so peaceful for long. The head of Atai Ulaan, the tenger who had been slain and dismembered by Han Hormasta, had turned into the monster Arhan Chotgor. Now, the monster was near Geser's home, lying in wait.

Arhan Chotgor grabbed the first man who came by—but it wasn't Geser. It was Geser's uncle Hara Zutan, who still hated Geser. Terrified, Hara Zutan told the monster, "I will help you hurt him. I will break Geser's bow and arrows. I will steal his wife Urmai Goohon, and you can have Tumen Jargalan."

The monster agreed. Late that night, Hara Zutan stole into Geser's house, broke the antler arrowheads off Geser's arrows, cut his bowstring, broke his sword, and smashed the tip of his spear.

When Geser came home and found that he was weaponless, he dared not wait, not with the lives of his wives at stake. He caught up with Arhan Chotgor and, without weapons, fought with all his skill. At last, he managed to break the monster's neck and slay him.

Then, he went after Hara Zutan, who fell to his knees before Geser, promising, "I won't do anything like this again!"

Since this was Geser's uncle, the hero reluctantly forgave Hara Zutan and sent him home.

But his trouble with Atai Ulaan had not ended just yet. Another demonic creature, Gal Nurman Khan, had sprung from the first vertebra of Atai Ulaan's severed neck. This monster sprang up from the dry, desolate home of the evil spirits and attacked the human world, setting things on fire wherever he went.

Geser tracked Gal Nurman Khan to his wilderness home, and they fought. The fiery demon was stronger than Geser, and, this time, things looked bleak for the hero. But the force of their fight sent a large chunk of rock crashing down from a cliff onto the evil being, crushing him.

Geser knew that Gal Nurman Khan did not live alone. He went on to fight and slay the evil demon-wife and demon-child as well.

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As time passed, Geser's fame grew. He tracked down the monster deer Orgoli, which had swallowed forty people whole. Orgoli tried to swallow Geser as well, but as Orgoli tried to suck him in, Geser wedged his spear crosswise in the deer's mouth and held on. Drawing his sword, he chopped off Orgoli's head. Out from the deer's vast body, saved by Geser, crawled the forty people Orgoli had swallowed.

Many other adventures followed in the ensuing years. Geser was not too proud to seek help when it was needed. Once, when he knew he could not defeat a monster, the powerful Sherem Minaata Khan, Geser listened to the advice of his wives and went to the upper world. There, he asked his immortal grandmother for aid. She gave him a stick that she used to beat fleece for felt making. Sure enough, that simple little stick was the one thing that could slay Sherem Minaata Khan. One blow over the monster's head, and he lay dead.

Returning home, Geser said to his wives, "Now that it is a good time, I will fill my quiver with arrows; now that it is a peaceful time I will collect my arrows."

But there can never be rest for a hero. Geser's life was forever full of adventures, far too many to be recounted here. He defeated monsters, demons, and enemies of the realm, and, with his efforts, continually kept peace and happiness for the people.

Geser and his wives lived happily for three days and three years—which was to be the only respite from the hero's never-ending adventures.

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A Bagful of Tricks

A Uighur Folktale from China

The Uighurs, powerful in Mongolia between the eighth and twelfth centuries, are Turkic-speaking people who live in northwestern China. The Uighur folktale "A Bagful of Tricks" tells of the trickster figure Effendi Nasreddin. The written record of this character's exploits first started appearing in about the thirteenth century C.E., and there may have been earlier oral tales.

The many tales of Effendi Nasreddin, a fellow who tends to get the better of the high and mighty, are popular from China to Turkey, where he is called Nasreddin Hodja, and the Middle East, where he may be called Mullah Nasreddin. All the honorifics—*effendi* means "master" in Turkish, a *hodja* is a scholar, and a mullah is a religious teacher or leader—attached to his name do not change the fact that Nasreddin is a gadfly, a satiric wise man who never hesitates to play the fool to make his point.

Once there was and once there was not a *padishah,* a great ruler, who heard of the tricks played on the high and mighty by the Effendi Nasreddin.

"I have heard this fellow is able even to trick a padishah. Can such a thing be?" he asked.

"It is true, your majesty," his ministers warily assured him. "This Nasreddin may be of common blood, but he is truly clever enough to trick anyone, even a padishah."

"That's impossible!" raged the padishah. "What, a—a nobody more clever than a ruler? It cannot be so!"

To prove his point, the padishah disguised himself as a common man and rode off to the village of the effendi. There, he greeted Nasreddin, who was sitting peacefully in front of his house. The padishah said to him, "It is said that here there lives a most clever man, the Effendi Nasreddin."

"So it is said."

"I have heard amazing tales of his cleverness, so amazing that I doubt they can be true. Can his fame for trickery possibly be justified?"

"I believe that it can," said the effendi, getting to his feet, "for Nasreddin I am. What can I do for you?"

"I have heard much about you," said the padishah. "I have heard that you can trick anyone and everyone. But I am here to warn you that today you shall not win your little game. For no one born has ever been able to fool me."

"So, now!" the effendi exclaimed as he scratched his head. "You are a difficult opponent; I can see that. For you no common trick will do. No, I must first go home and get my special bag full of tricks. Unless, of course, you are afraid of that bag!"

"Nonsense! Get whatever bag you wish—but be quick about it!"

"Well, now, my home is a good distance from here. If you would lend me your horse, I could be there and back again in almost no time. Otherwise, I would have to walk and walk and—"

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"Never mind! Here is my horse. Now, go get your bag of tricks. And hurry back here as quickly as you can ride. I am eager to test your cleverness!"

Effendi Nasreddin bowed low, then leaped into the saddle and rode off as swiftly as an arrow from a bow. The padishah stood impatiently waiting.

And waiting.

And waiting.

Night fell. At last, the truth struck the padishah: Nasreddin was not coming back.

"He tricked me!" the padishah admitted. "He did just what he set out to do. The Effendi Nasreddin has tricked the padishah!"

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The Story of Gelert

A Welsh Local Folktale

The story of the faithful dog Gelert is an example of a local legend—the Welsh town of Beddgelert (also called Beth-Gelert), or "Gelert's Grave," was named for it—and of a world tale, since similar stories of similarly faithful dogs and mistrustful masters can be found around the world. This particular version dates from the nineteenth century.

Somewhere around the year 1200, Prince Llewellyn had a castle at Aber. Indeed, parts of the towers remain to this day. His consort was Princess Joan, the daughter of King John. Llewellyn was a great hunter of wolves and foxes, for the hills of Carnarvonshire were infested with wolves in those days, after the young lambs.

Now, the prince had several hunting houses, and one of them was at the place now called Beth-Gelert, where the wolves were very thick at this time. The prince used to travel from farmhouse to farmhouse with his family and friends when going on these hunting parties.

One season, they went hunting from Aber, and they stopped at the house where Beth-Gelert is now—which was about 14 miles away. The prince had all his hounds with him, but his favorite was Gelert, a hound who had never let off a wolf for six years.

The prince loved the dog like a child, and, at the sound of his horn, Gelert was always the first to come bounding up. There was company at the house, and, one day, they went hunting, leaving Llewellyn's wife behind at the farmhouse with their child in a big wooden cradle.

The hunting party killed three or four wolves. About two hours before the word passed for returning home, Llewellyn missed Gelert, and he asked his huntsmen:

"Where's Gelert? I don't see him."

"Well, indeed, master, I've missed him this half hour."

And Llewellyn blew his horn, but no Gelert came at the sound.

Indeed, Gelert had gotten on to a wolves' track that led to the house.

The prince sounded the return, and they went home, the prince lamenting Gelert. "He's sure to have been slain—he's sure to have been slain since he did not answer the horn. Oh, my Gelert!"

And they approached the house, and the prince went into the house, and saw Gelert lying by the overturned cradle, and blood all about the room.

"What! Hast thou slain my child?" asked the prince, and ran his sword through the dog.

After that, he lifted up the cradle to look for his child and found underneath it the body of a big wolf that Gelert had slain. His child was safe. Gelert had capsized the cradle in the scuffle.

"Oh, Gelert! Oh, Gelert!" said the prince. "My favorite hound! My favorite hound! Thou hast been slain by thy master's hand, and in death thou hast licked thy master's hand!" He patted the dog, but it was too late, and poor Gelert died licking his master's hand.

The next day, they made a coffin and had a regular funeral, the same as if Gelert were

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a human being, all the servants and everybody else in deep mourning.

They made Gelert a grave, and the village was called after the dog, Beth-Gelert (Gelert's Grave). The prince planted a tree and laid a gravestone of slate, though it was before the days of quarries. And they are to be seen there to this day.

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Vainamoinen

A Finnish Hero Tale

Vainamoinen is one of the heroes of the Finnish epic the *Kalevala,* which was compiled from epic ballads by Elias Lönnrot in the late nineteenth century. Although Vainamoinen looks like an old man, he has the magical strength of a true wizard and the spirit of a warrior.

Vainamoinen was the son not of a mortal woman but of an air spirit, Ilmatar. Ilmatar, impregnated by the wind, came to rest on the earth ocean for long years while the world formed around her, and her son grew in her womb. For sixty years, Vainamoinen lived and grew in that warm, safe prison, but, at last, he could stand this strange captivity no longer and burst free into the world.

His long time in the womb had marked him. Vainamoinen was no babe, no young boy. He was a gray-bearded man, old yet not old, wise with more than human knowledge, a skilled singer of magic songs.

But the world into which he'd arrived was still barren and bleak. Vainamoinen set about sowing the world for humankind, fruit and field and forest, and he sang the world's first magic sowing song as he did, ensuring fertile crops forever after. Now, the world was done, and humans flourished like the forest trees.

Word of Vainamoinen's primal deeds and magic songs spread. And whenever there is one well known for a skill, along will come a younger one to challenge him.

Joukahaimen was a young magician, a spell singer who fancied himself quite a master of the craft. He was full of pride and the arrogance of the untried, and he meant to pick fights with other wizards, singing them into defeat.

His father forbade it, and his mother pleaded, "They will bewitch you; they will destroy you, sing you into helpless snow!"

"I will sing the best singer into the worst!" Joukahaimen replied, and he set out, heedless of his parents' pain.

It was Vainamoinen whom Joukahaimen truly wished to meet and defeat. It was Vainamoinen he did meet, quite by accident. The winter snow was heavy, leaving only a narrow road down which he drove his sleigh, just as Vainamoinen was driving the other way. Vainamoinen had the right of way, but Joukahaimen refused to give it. Shaft tangled with shaft, trace with trace, and the two sleighs came to a sudden rough stop.

"Who are you?" Vainamoinen shouted. "What clan, rude one?"

"I am Joukahaimen. Now name your own lowly clan!"

"I am Vainamoinen. Move aside, youngster. I have no quarrel with a boy."

"My youth is a small matter!" Joukahaimen retorted. "It's our knowledge that's the point, our magic skill. It's he who is the master there who should have the right of way."

"What do I know?" Vainamoinen said with great sarcasm. "I have always lived my life as a farmer, sowing crops. And what, young man, do you know?"

Joukahaimen never heard the sarcasm, never saw how he was being baited. He boasted of the wondrous things he'd seen and heard, expecting this old graybeard to cringe in fright. He told of knowing the trees in every forest, the fish in every stream. He told of

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knowing how the North plowed with a reindeer, the South with a mare.

But all Vainamoinen said was, "Childish knowledge. Easy things. What else do you know?"

Stung, Joukahaimen boasted of more and wondrous things he'd learned. He told of knowing the origin of birds, the language of snakes, the heart of water from a mountain, the heart of fire from the lightning, the heart of rust in iron.

Vainamoinen heard him out, all these young man's boastings, then asked mildly, "Is this all? Has your ranting come at last to its end?"

Still not seeing how the old man baited him, Joukahaimen boasted wildly, claiming that he had plowed the sea, set the land in place, sowed it with seed—even that he'd guided the Sun and Moon and set the stars in the sky.

"Now I know you lie," Vainamoinen said. "No one saw you plow the sea; nor were you there when the world was made. Small wit, yours, if you claim such things."

"If I have small wit," Joukahaimen snapped, "then I'll let my sword speak for me!"

Vainamoinen only looked at him with scorn. "I'm not afraid of you, youngster, nor of your sword or wit. Enough of this game. Be off with you."

Joukahaimen nearly roared with rage. "Whoever fears to fight a duel, him will I sing into the shape of a pig! A dead pig in a dunghill!"

Vainamoinen hissed in sudden fury. That this mere child should dare insult him thus! He began to sing—began to sing the magic songs. No children's rhymes were these, no boyish things. Pure magic were they, so mighty that the land around him shook and mountains trembled.

And he sang magic over young Joukahaimen, sang green sprouts onto his bow, willows onto his sleigh's shafts, sang the sleigh itself into a pond and the horse into a rock, sang Joukahaimen's sword into lightning, his arrows into hawks, sang Joukahaimen's cap into a cloud, his gloves into lilies in the pond, his coat into a patch of sky.

And still Vainamoinen sang, his fury yet unabated, sang against Joukahaimen himself, sang the young man into the ground to his ankles, his knees, his armpits. All the while, Joukahaimen tried his best to fight back, to sing a spell song in self-defense, but not a word would come. He could not pull so much as a foot free from the earth, and, all the while, Vainamoinen was singing him deeper, ever deeper!

"Wait! Good, kind, wise Vainamoinen, wait. Reverse your spells; release me. I will give you any payment you desire, any ransom you may name."

That pierced the cloud of Vainamoinen's wrath, though it did not dissolve it utterly. "What payment would you make?"

"I have two fine bows—"

"I have no need of your bows." And he sang Joukahaimen deeper into the earth.

"I have two swift boats—"

"I have no need of your boats." And he sang Joukahaimen deeper into the earth.

"Horses, then! I have fine stallions, mighty steeds—"

"I have no need of horses." And he sang Joukahaimen deeper yet into the earth.

On and on Joukahaimen ranted, offering anything that was his to give and many things that were not. But Vainamoinen was not moved.

At last, despairing, buried to his chin and spitting out mud, the young man pleaded, "Reverse your spells. Sing them backward and release me, oh, wondrous wizard. In my mother's house there lives my sister, fairest Aino. Sing me free, Vainamoinen, and she shall be your wife."

Vainamoinen paused. A wife. He had been lonely, alone of his kind. A wife would warm his days and nights. Vainamoinen sang the young man free, restoring clothes and weapons, sleigh and horse.

Joukahaimen stammered out nervous thanks, no longer the arrogant young wizard.

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He hurried home in such haste that he crashed the sleigh against the side of his parents' house.

And so ended the duel. But alas, when she heard she was to wed the ancient, mighty wizard, Aino heard nothing of "mighty" or "wizard." She listened to no word about how kind Vainamoinen would be to her, how easy and happy her life would be. No, Aino heard only "ancient." Crying that she would not be married off to an old, old man, and one who was not even truly human, Aino cast herself into the sea.

Vainamoinen wept for her, grieved for her, and, in the grieving, maybe wept a bit for himself, so old, so wise, yet so lonely. Aino stayed in the ocean, transformed into a fish. And there Vainamoinen was forced to leave her.

Aino's tale ends in the sea. Vainamoinen, though, the mighty wizard, Vainamoinen went on to more adventures.

But never did he, greatest of spell singers, wisest of heroes, win a wife for himself.

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Guigemar

A Medieval French Hero Tale

"Guigemar," one of Marie de France's twelfth-century heroic romances, shows some of the roots of the modern romance as well as many of the traditions of medieval folktales and chansons de geste. The tale contains familiar folk themes, such as the hero who does not know love and the knot that cannot be untied by any but the lover.

In the case of the hero who does not know love, examples can be found in mythology and folklore, such as in the Teutonic story of Siegfried, in which the hero does not know love until he sees Brynhild and is smitten, and in European folktales such as "The Boy Who Never Shuddered." The knot that cannot be untied is an echo of the bow that can be drawn only by Odysseus or Rama, or the sword that can be drawn only by the rightful king. There is also the twelfth-century image of courtly love, in which a young man and woman are ideally to love each other truly, without the burden of marriage. As an educated woman, Marie de France would have been well aware of these themes.

Guigemar was a handsome, brave young man with only one flaw: He had never known love and had no real interest in the subject. Then, in a hunting accident, he was wounded by an arrow and told by the hind that he had wounded that nothing could cure him but the woman he loved.

Since Guigemar wanted to be healed, he went questing for a woman to love. But when he took shelter for the night in an abandoned ship, he awoke to find himself helplessly adrift. Since he had no idea how to sail a ship, he prayed to God for help.

The ship sailed straight into a castle's harbor. The ruler of that castle was an old man who kept his young wife a prisoner locked in her chambers. But her attendants were sympathetic to her plight, and when they found the handsome young Guigemar, they spirited him to her. She healed his wound, and the two young people fell utterly in love. They spent a deliriously happy time together, but of course the old man found out.

The young woman tied a knot in Guigemar's shirt, telling him that only the woman he loved would be able to untie it. He fastened his belt (symbolizing a chastity belt) about her waist, saying that only the one who loved her would be able to remove it.

Then, Guigemar was captured by the old man's guards and thrown into his ship, which was cast adrift. Everyone was sure that the young man would die.

But the old man made a mistake; one day, he neglected to lock the door. His wife stole away, found a small boat, and cast off, hoping to join Guigemar in death. Instead, the boat took her to another castle.

This castle was ruled over by Meriaduc, a strong lord who instantly fell in love with the beautiful young woman. He wanted to take her to bed but could not unfasten Guigemar's

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belt. Frustrated, he told her that there was another like her, a young man with a knotted shirt that no woman could remove. Learning that Guigemar was still alive, the young woman nearly fainted with joy.

Now that Meriaduc knew that she loved Guigemar, he planned a tournament, knowing that it would lure Guigemar to the castle. Sure enough, the young man arrived, and there was a joyous but brief reunion between him and his love.

As soon as the knot was untied and the belt removed, Meriaduc stated that he would not give the young woman up.

Guigemar left and later returned with an army. He captured the castle and killed Meriaduc. Guigemar and his love went off together with much rejoicing.

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A Story of Gwydion

A Medieval Welsh Mythic Tale

Gwydion is a powerful but good-hearted magician-prince who is a major character in the Welsh medieval collection of tales called the *Mabinogion*. Gwydion originally may have been a deity, like his uncle Math, but this point is still being debated by scholars.

This is only part of the long and complex tale of Gwydion, whose adventures are included in the *Mabinogion*. The first four stories of this work, which predate the written *Mabinogion,* are referred to as the "four branches." There is much debate about just how old the "four branches" are, but elements in the four tales make a good case for roots in the pre-Christian era. This assessment could place the stories as far back as the first millennium B.C.E.

Gwydion came from a magical family. His uncle Math was the son of Mathonwy, ruler of the land of Gwynedd in present-day northern Wales. Math was a powerful magician, the strongest in all the realm. And Gwydion was no weak conjurer.

Ah no, Gwydion could transform sticks to boars, weeds to shoes, whatever he wished into whatever he wished, himself included, without any difficulty at all. Since he was a good man at heart, this great talent was generally no problem to Gwydion or to others. Generally, that is.

Gwydion had gotten himself into trouble by sympathizing with his lovesick brother. Gwydion had used his magic to win a young woman for his brother. She had been the ritual foot-holder for Math, whose power was such that his feet must never touch the bare earth. The young magician had spent time in animal shape after helping his brother, thanks to his angry uncle's greater magic.

So now another foot-holder had to be found. No easy matter that, since the young woman chosen must be pure of heart and body. Aranhrod came forward, she who was Gwydion's sister (though, truth to tell, they had little enough to do with each other, she like chill winter, he like bright summer), to claim the title. Gwydion wondered at that, since he knew his sister was hardly pure in either sense. But come forward she did—to her shame.

Any candidate for foot-holder must first step over a magic wand, and the moment Aranhrod did so, she cried out and gave birth on the spot to two children. One, a finely formed boy, was named Dylan, son of the wave (for, as it turned out later, he was a child of the fair folk of the sea). The second was barely formed at all, a baby too soon torn from the womb.

Aranhrod fled without a backward glance, but Gwydion, his heart aching with pity for his too-new nephew, swept the poor thing up in his cloak and rushed off for his quarters. There, he magicked a chest into a warming container, as close to a womb as his magic could make it, and placed the baby safely within.

"Live, little one," he whispered. "Grow strong and healthy."

And so the baby did. Taken at last from the chest, he was as healthy and lusty lunged

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as any baby normally born. Gwydion found a nurse for him, a cheerful woman with milk for more than her own baby. The only thing Gwydion could not do for his nephew was name him. That task, by law and magic, must be done by the boy's mother.

"In time," Gwydion said. "In time."

And time passed. The baby grew to a fine, handsome boy, as fair as Gwydion and warm of heart.

"Now, what woman would not be joyous to see so fine a son?" Gwydion thought, watching the boy laughing and running at play. "Even Aranhrod surely will feel some softening of her cold heart at the sight of him."

But Aranhrod had no desire to be reminded of her humiliation back at Math's court. "That is not my son. In fact, I place this curse on him: He shall have no name save from my lips, and my lips shall never utter a name for him."

The magic in this curse was strong, for Aranhrod had inherited some of the family powers as well. Gwydion drew back in horror, for how could a man without a name ever win honor for himself? "You are a wicked woman to harm one who never harmed you! But I vow that name him you shall."

Back Gwydion went to Caer Dathl, his fortress, and he thought long and long again on what he must do. He walked along the beach below the fortress, now and again staring across the water at Aranhrod's fortress, Caer Aranhrod, on its island, and the gathered dulse and seaweed. From this, he conjured a ship and a great mass of the finest cordovan leather. No one had ever seen more supple, beautiful leather!

"Of course not," Gwydion said with a laugh. "For it comes not from some poor cow but from my own will."

He cast magic over himself and his nephew as well, making them look like nothing more than a common shoemaker and his apprentice, then set sail for Caer Aranhrod. A messenger came scurrying down from the fortress to see who had come, then went scurrying back up to his mistress.

"A shoemaker has come here, lady, and he has the finest leather that ever I've seen."

Aranhrod had her feet outlined on a bit of cowhide. "Give this to the shoemaker. Have him make me a pair of shoes."

But Gwydion cleverly made them far too big. The next pair he made too small. Then he grumbled, as a real shoemaker might, "I cannot work from charts alone! I must work from the lady's living foot."

Aranhrod was not about to let a stranger into her fortress. She went down to him. And while Gwydion was pretending to measure her foot, the boy, her son, played at hunting. A wren landed on the boat's mast, and the boy shot it down with a stone from his sling so neatly that Aranhrod cried out, "What a sure hand that fair-haired child has shown!"

"And what a fine name you have given him!" Gwydion cried, dropping his magical disguise. "Lleu Llaw Gyffes, Fair-haired Sure of Hand, shall he be!"

Raging, Aranhrod shouted, "I put this curse on him, then: He shall never take arms till I arm him—and that, I shall never do!"

For a man in that warrior world not to be able to use weapons was a harsh curse, indeed. "A wicked woman you were; a wicked woman you are," Gwydion told her. "But I swear this: He shall take arms!"

Gwydion sailed back to his fortress with his newly named nephew, soothing the boy's fear. "You have a name. I will win you arms; never fear. Have I not given my word?"

But first some time had to pass, time in which Lleu Llaw Gyffes grew into a fine youngster just on the edge of manhood. But Gwydion saw the pain in his eyes when the other boys Lleu's age practiced with sword or spear.

"Come," he said to his nephew. "Time for you to be armed."

He cast a spell over them both, making them look like a world-weary bard and his apprentice, then traveled back to Caer Aranhrod. Bards were always welcome in those days, so it was with no difficulty at all that Gwydion and Lleu won entry. Gwydion happened to be a

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fine teller of tales, so Aranhrod listened to him without the slightest doubt that he was, indeed, a bard. And, as a bard, he and his "apprentice" were given a fine sleeping chamber that night.

Long before dawn, Gwydion arose and called his magic powers to him. As the sun rose, the air filled with the sounds of war: trumpets blared; men shouted; weapons clashed. It was not long before Aranhrod herself came to the chamber and said, "Bards, I will not deny that we're in a sorry fix. There is no way out for you—for any of us—but to fight. And we need every able-bodied man. Will you fight?"

"Gladly," Gwydion said, and began donning the armor Aranhrod's men had brought. "Och, but my lad there is still new to weaponry. Won't you help him with his armor, lady?"

Now Aranhrod was in such a frantic state, she thought nothing of it. But as she finished helping the "apprentice" don armor, the clamor of battle stopped as suddenly as though cut off by a wall. The disguise fell from Gwydion and Lleu. "Thank you, Sister!" the magician cried ironically. "For now Lleu is armed, and by your own hands."

"May you suffer for what you've done!"

"I? I've done nothing but help your son."

"Many a boy could have come to grief during your magical tricks!"

"Nary a one. And it's you who should suffer, Sister, for the harm you wished on Lleu. But now—"

"But now my curse on him! May he never find a wife of any race known in this world!"

"He has a name, no thanks to you, he bears arms, no thanks to you, and he shall yet find a wife, no thanks to you!"

But Gwydion left that fortress saddened. This time no simple trick of illusion would help. Where would Lleu find a wife if not among the races of the world?

"If I cannot help Lleu," Gwydion thought, "then perhaps Math can. He is, after all, the most powerful magician in the realm."

So off Gwydion went to his uncle, to tell him all that had befallen. "All is not lost, not yet," Math said after a while. "Come, nephew. We must gather flowers."

"Flowers?"

"If we cannot find a bride for Lleu, then we shall make one."

Math and Gwydion worked long hours over the flowers they had gathered. What spells they said, what charms they wove, none can guess. But at the end of it all, there were two very weary magicians—and one woman, as new as the springtime, as lovely as the flowers. Blodeuedd, they named her, and gave her to Lleu as his bride. Math gave them both Cantref Dinoding to rule over, and, for a time, all went well with Lleu and his strange lady.

But Blodeuedd was, after all, made of flowers. She lacked the deep soul of a true human woman. One day, Gronw Pebyr, Lord of Penllyn, stopped by Lleu's fortress when he was not at home. Blodeuedd gave Gronw hospitality. And after the two of them had spent some time in staring hotly at each other, she gave him a great deal more.

"But I have a husband," she murmured to Gronw.

"Such can be removed."

"Not he. He is the nephew and great-nephew of magicians, and not vulnerable as are ordinary men."

"He still breathes like ordinary men. There must be a way to slay him. Find it, Blodeuedd."

That night, Lleu returned home, and Blodeuedd pretended to be joyous. But later, she pretended just as easily to be sorrowful.

"Why, now, wife, what's wrong?"

"If you must know, husband, I am worrying about your death. If someone should kill you—"

"Och, foolish! It is not easy to kill me."

"Why not? Are you not a man? Love, please, please, don't jest with me!"

Lleu saw the worry in her eyes and thought—how not?—that it was all for him. "Love, hear me: It would not be easy to kill me even with a cast of a spear. For that spear could only be made by someone working on it a year, and only on each holy day at that."

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"But then you could be slain!"

"Not easily. For I cannot be killed in a house nor outside, neither on horse nor on foot."

"Then—then, how *could* you be slain?"

He still thought the worry in her eyes was for him, all for him, and Lleu smiled at his wife and told her, "One must make a bath for me on the river bank, and construct a roof over the tub, as though to make it a good shelter. Then, that one must find a goat and bring it beside the tub. I must stand with one foot on the goat's back, the other on the edge of the tub. Only then can I be slain."

Of course, Blodeuedd pretended to be greatly relieved—and, of course, she sent word to Gronw, who set about making the spear. A year passed, and then, when Blodeuedd heard that the spear was done, she said to Lleu, "This is foolish of me, my lord, I know it. But . . . och, I cannot picture how one could possibly stand with one foot on a goat's back and the other on the edge of a tub! Surely that's impossible!"

In that year, she had given Lleu nothing but assurances of her love. And he, young man that he was, never thought once of how foolish he was being. "Come, love, I'll show you how it can be done."

So he stood with one foot on the edge of the tub placed at the riverbank and all roofed over, and the other foot on the goat.

And Gronw cast the fatal spear. Lleu screamed as it pierced him. But Lleu had just enough magic in his blood to change to an eagle's form and fly away.

Gwydion, far from there at the court of Math, felt his nephew's cry in every nerve and sinew. "Uncle—"

"I felt it, too."

"I will find him," Gwydion swore. "I will know no rest till I find him."

He wandered here and there and here again, and rested one night in the hut of a swineherd. Gwydion, waking early, saw one sow set off from the pen at a good clip and followed, wondering. She came to a tree, where she fed on that which fell from it. And that was a terrible thing: rotten flesh. Gwydion looked sharply up, and there in that tree, on the uppermost branch, was a sickly eagle, weak and all but dead, and it was from this bird that the rotten flesh fell.

"Lleu," Gwydion breathed. "You don't even remember being human, poor wounded lad, do you?"

He began, very softly and carefully, to sing the eagle out of the tree, his magic tender. At the first verse, the eagle slid down from the upper branch to a lower. At the second verse, the eagle slipped down to the lowest branch. And at the third verse, he landed weakly on Gwydion's knee. Gwydion touched him with magic, and the eagle was Lleu again, but Lleu was so gravely thin and sick that Gwydion feared he would die. Hastily, the magician brought him home, and all the doctors in Gwynedd tended him.

And at the end of the year, Lleu was healthy again.

"Now," Gwydion murmured to Math, "is the time for justice."

"Indeed," Math agreed, and mustered his men.

Off they rode for Cantref Dinoding, which had all this while been in the hands of Gronw Pebyr and the treacherous Blodeuedd. When Blodeuedd saw the army, she cried out in terror, "Gwydion has come for me!"

She fled out across the wilderness, but no matter how she ran, Gwydion was right behind her. At last, she could go no farther. "Don't kill me!"

"I won't," Gwydion agreed grimly. "But for the shame and harm you brought upon Lleu, you shall never see the light of day again. You shall fly only by night, and all the other birds shall hate you. Yes, birds, Blodeuedd. No longer flowers, but owl, no longer Blodeuedd but Blodeuwedd." And Blodeuwedd, "flower face," she became, for that is the look of an owl's face, and she flew despairingly away.

As for Gronw Pebyr, it was Lleu who cornered that villain. "What fine will you accept?" Gronw cried. "Copper? Silver? Gold? Name your blood price, and I will pay it!"

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"No blood price save this," Lleu replied coldly. "A cast of a spear as you gave to me."

Gronw snatched up a great stone to shield himself, but so powerful was the fury of Lleu Llaw Gyffes that his spear stabbed right through the stone—and through Gronw, too.

Lleu Llaw Gyffes took possession of his land once more, and ruled it well. And as for Gwydion and his adventures after—that tale is not known.

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Raven Steals the Sun

An American Myth from the Pacific Northwest

Raven is a major trickster figure and religious personage in the mythic traditions of most of the indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest. This particular tale is told with only minor variations by all the cultural groups of the region.

In the days before the rules of things were set down, the world and sky alike were forever dark, so dark that nothing could be seen—so dark, in fact, that Raven could not see to hunt. He quickly grew weary of flying into rocks and tripping over roots.

"This will never do," he said.

So Raven listened. He heard, from where no one knows, that there was one source of light, one bright golden ball kept by a greedy old man who would not share it with anyone.

"This will never do," Raven repeated, and went in search of the old man.

At last, he came to the old man's lodge, and waited in hiding to see what he would learn.

So, now! The old man had a young daughter. Quick-witted Raven swiftly designed a plan.

"May I be a pine needle floating upon the water," he said.

And instantly, he became a pine needle floating upon the water.

"May the old man's daughter have a great thirst," Raven whispered, "and may she drink me right down."

Instantly, the old man's daughter was seized by a great thirst. Grabbing up a cedarwood drinking cup, she gulped down water—and drank down Raven with the water.

Soon after that, the belly of the old man's daughter began to swell with child.

"Who is the father?" the old man shouted. "Name him!"

But his daughter wept and swore that she had never met another man nor given anyone her love.

So time passed with no solving of the mystery. At last, she gave birth to a plump, handsome baby boy. The old man was so delighted with his new grandson that he forgot to be angry with his daughter. He was so delighted that he wanted to fulfill his grandson's every wish.

He was so delighted that he never noticed that the baby had clever black eyes—the eyes of Raven reborn.

One day, Raven began to wail. He began to whine. He began to shout and beat his arms and legs on the ground. "Gimmee!" he shrieked. "Gimmee!"

The sound was horrible. Hands over his ears, the old man asked, "Give you *what*? What do you want, Grandson?"

"Gimmee! Gimmee!"

The old man gave Raven toy after toy, but Raven batted them all away.

"Gimmee! Gimmee!"

The old man was at his wits' end. "What do you want?" he shouted.

"Ball! Want golden ball!"

"No!"

"Want! Want! Want!"

With each shriek, Raven's voice grew shriller. At last, the old man could stand no more of it. Warily, he opened the cedar chest in which he kept the golden ball. Instantly, a beautiful golden glow spread throughout the darkness.

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"Here," the old man said. "But be careful with it!"

"Oh, I will!" Raven cried.

Suddenly, he was bird-Raven again. The golden ball firmly clutched in his talons, he flapped up and away.

"Come back!" the old man cried.

"Sorry, but no!" Raven called back.

Now, Raven had a rival, Eagle. In the days before light, Eagle couldn't find Raven easily. But all at once he could see Raven clearly! He flew after his rival, his mighty wings gaining with every stroke. And Raven, oh, Raven was burdened by the weight of the golden ball. Eagle would catch him!

"No!" Raven shouted.

Angrily, he broke off a piece of the golden ball and hurled it into the sky.

And that was the birth of the Sun.

But Eagle still pursued Raven, and his mighty wings were gaining with every stroke. Raven was still burdened by the weight of the golden ball.

"No!" he shouted.

Angrily, he broke off another piece of the golden ball and hurled it into the sky.

And that was the birth of the Moon.

But Eagle still pursued Raven, and his mighty wings were gaining with every stroke. Raven was still burdened by the weight of what was left of the golden ball.

"So be it!" he shouted.

Crumbling up what was left of the golden ball, he threw the gleaming, glittering pieces into the sky. Lighter now, he quickly outflew Eagle.

And in the sky . . . well, now, that was the birth of the stars

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Orpheus and Eurydice

An Ancient Greek Myth

Orpheus was an Argonaut, one of Jason's crew aboard the ship *Argo* in the heroic quest for the Golden Fleece, but he is best known for this tragic tale of his love for Eurydice. It is a tale type found throughout the world: the quest to the underworld to save a loved one from death. The tale type can be found in the Sumerian myth of Inanna's descent to the underworld. It also can be found in folktales from around the world, including one from the American Southwest in which a man tries to rescue his wife from the afterlife, only to learn that she does not want to leave.

Orpheus was the son of Apollo, god of music, and the muse Calliope. With so noble a heritage, he was born with amazing talent. Orpheus's father presented him with a lyre and taught the boy to play it. Soon Orpheus was such a wondrous musician that men and women wept to hear him, and even the wildest beasts grew tame hearing him play.

Lovely young Eurydice and he met, and loved, and became joyous husband and wife. But not long after their marriage, a shepherd made advances to Eurydice. She ran from him—and, in her haste, she stepped on a snake lying hidden in the grass. It bit her, and poor Eurydice died.

Orpheus released his grief in song, expressing bitter sorrow in music to gods and men alike. But no one could aid him. At last, his grief unchecked, Orpheus vowed to snatch Eurydice back from the realm of the dead.

So Orpheus traveled down to the underworld. His song moved all who heard it, and even Cerberus, the terrible three-headed dog-guardian, whined and crouched down to let Orpheus pass. At last, Orpheus sang before Hades, the king of the underworld, and Persephone, Hades's wife. Persephone wept to hear his sorrow, and even Hades bowed his proud head.

"You may take Eurydice away with you. But there is one condition. You must lead her, but you must not so much as glance back at her until you both have reached the upper air and the land of the living."

"I shall do it," Orpheus swore.

He led Eurydice up the dark, rocky, steep passages. Utter silence surrounded them, wearing on Orpheus's nerves. What if Eurydice wasn't following him? What if Hades had tricked him?

No! He would not look back.

They climbed farther up in the darkness and heavy silence. What if it wasn't Eurydice following him? What if it was some demon of the underworld?

No! He would not look back!

They were almost at the entrance to the upper world, the world of the living. Was Eurydice still following? Was it Eurydice? Was she—

Orpheus glanced behind him. Instantly, Eurydice was swept away from him, back to the underworld. Orpheus was left alone once more.

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Perseus

A Greek Myth of a Culture Hero

Perseus is a culture hero of ancient Greece. His story includes several folk motifs. First is the princess locked away in a tower where no one but a hero (or, in this case, a god) can reach her. Then there is the prophecy that a king will be killed by his son or grandson, which the king tries in vain to overturn. In another familiar motif, Perseus performs a classic hero quest, slaying Medusa and then rescuing a princess from a dragon. All these elements make him of particular interest to folklorists and storytellers alike.

There once lived a king named Acrisius whose daughter was named Danae. But an oracle warned Acrisius that a son of Danae would be the one to kill him. Loving life more than his daughter, Acrisius locked Danae in a bronze tower with no door and only one small window. Now, the king thought, his daughter would never marry or have children. He would be safe from the prophecy.

Acrisius had reckoned without considering the gods. A bright shower of gold blazed in through the window in Danae's tower and turned into the splendid Zeus, chief of the gods. God and mortal woman loved each other, and, in time, Danae bore a son, whom she named Perseus.

When Acrisius found Danae with her son, he was terrified and furious. He would not let the prophecy come true! So he had Danae and Perseus shut in a large chest and cast out to sea.

But the chest did not sink. It floated safely over the waves to the island of Seriphos, where mother and son were rescued by King Polydectes.

Perseus grew up to become a fine, clever young man. But King Polydectes grew obsessed with Danae's beauty. He asked for her hand, but she refused him. Polydectes would have wed her by force, but Perseus stood between them.

What could the furious Polydectes do? He couldn't simply have Perseus slain. That would not be a kingly act. Instead, he secretly plotted to be rid of the inconvenient young man.

The king announced that he would be marrying another royal woman, and that everyone who was loyal to him must bring a suitably noble present. Perseus alone could bring nothing because, as Polydectes knew very well, Perseus owned nothing. But this was the king's chance. He pretended to be offended, claiming that the young man to whom he'd given hospitality was useless and disloyal—knowing perfectly well what would happen.

Sure enough, the insulted Perseus cried that he could bring Polydectes anything the king might wish.

"Then bring me the head of the Gorgon Medusa!" King Polydectes stated.

"Done!" Perseus retorted.

Only as he set out on his quest for the Gorgon did Perseus discover what he was hunting. There were three Gorgons, Eryale, Stheno, and Medusa. They had once been human sisters, but they had offended the gods, and now they laired together, three monsters. Medusa was the most terrible of the three, but also the only one who was still mortal. She had writhing serpents for hair, and her stare

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could turn a man instantly to stone. Perseus secretly despaired, wondering how he could ever take her head.

Fortunately for Perseus, the goddess Athene hated Medusa. She appeared before the startled Perseus, a tall, handsome, cool-eyed woman. Beside her stood a golden-haired young man wearing winged sandals. This was Hermes, the messenger of the gods.

"We have decided to help you slay Medusa," Perseus was told.

Hermes gave Perseus the winged sandals and the deadly metal sickle that Cronos had once used to overpower his father, Uranus. Athene gave him a highly polished shield, as shiny as a mirror. Perseus would be able to slay Medusa by looking only at her reflection, and would not be turned to stone.

"Now you must find the Graeae," Hermes said. "You must win from them the way to the Stygian Nymphs."

With that, the two gods vanished.

Perseus set out to find the Graeae. When he reached their cave, he hid, watching them. What strange beings they were! They seemed almost like ancient women, but they had only one eye among the three of them, and took turns using it—when they weren't busy fighting over whose turn it was.

As soon as one took out the eye to give to another, Perseus sprang from his hiding place and snatched the eye from them. "Tell me how to find the Stygian Nymphs, or I won't give you back your eye," he said.

Grumbling, the Graeae gave him directions. Giving them back their eye, Perseus flew off on the winged sandals.

The Stygian Nymphs were friendlier than the Graeae. They gave Perseus the Cap of Darkness to make him invisible and a magic wallet in which he could safely place Medusa's head, then told him how to reach the Gorgons' lair.

Perseus flew on, following their directions, until he came to a mountainous island. To his horror, what he had taken to be rocks were stone figures that used to be men. He'd reached the Gorgons' lair.

Perseus raised his shield, using it as a mirror, and saw Medusa and her sisters asleep. Hastily, he put on the Cap of Darkness and flew down. Still watching only in the shield-mirror, he swung the sickle and felt it cut through Medusa's neck. Not daring to look away from the image in the shield, he forced Medusa's head into the magic wallet. As Medusa's sisters woke to attack, Perseus quickly flew away.

Perseus performed one act of kindness on the flight back to Seriphos. He met Atlas, the huge Titan who had been sentenced by Zeus to hold up the sky. At the Titan's weary request, he showed Atlas Medusa's head, turning him to stone so that he could no longer feel the weight of his burden.

Perseus flew on, skimming the seacoast. Suddenly, he saw what looked like a lovely statue chained to a rock. But as Perseus flew lower, he realized that it wasn't a statue, but a beautiful young woman.

"Who are you?" he cried. "Why are you chained here?"

She turned a tearful face up to him. "I am Andromeda, and I am here because my mother boasted about me. She claimed that I was more beautiful than the Nereids, the nymphs of the sea. That angered Poseidon, who proclaimed that I must be sacrificed to a sea monster."

Even as she finished, a hideous creature rose from the sea, tentacles waving and beak clashing. Andromeda screamed, but Perseus simply pulled Medusa's head out of the wallet, and the sea monster turned to stone. The monster crumbled to pieces and fell back into the sea.

"It, not you, was the sacrifice," Perseus said.

Cutting Andromeda's chains, Perseus flew with her to her father, King Cepheus of Phoenicia. By this time, the young people were clinging to each other happily. And when Perseus asked for Andromeda's hand in marriage, Cepheus gladly agreed.

So Perseus took Andromeda in his arms once more and set off for Seriphos. But he

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wasn't Hermes, who could fly around the world without getting weary. On the way, Perseus and Andromeda stopped to rest at Larisa. There, Perseus tried his hand in some athletic games. But when he threw the discus, the wind caught it. The discus hit an old man in the head and slew him.

It was none other than King Acrisius, he who had tried to prevent Danae from having a child. The prophecy had come true, despite what the king had done to prevent it. Perseus mourned for the proper length of time, though it might have been difficult to mourn for a grandfather who had cast his daughter and grandson into the sea to die.

When Perseus and Andromeda arrived at Seriphos, Perseus learned that King Polydectes had never married but had forced Danae to serve as his handmaiden.

Furious, Perseus strode into the palace and shouted, "Let all who are my friends shield their eyes!"

With that, he raised Medusa's head. In an instant, Polydectes and his courtiers were changed to statues. Danae happily rushed into her son's arms.

Perseus and Andromeda lived happily for many years, and their descendants became great kings. Perhaps the greatest of these was the famous Heracles, the strongest man in the world.

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Spider Woman

Creation Myth of the Hopi People

Spider Woman is a supernatural being, a creator figure for the Hopi people. She is also an important figure to the Diné (Navajo) people. Many of the stories about Spider Woman portray her as very powerful and generally as a very commonsensical being.

Spider Woman was not born of mortal parents. Indeed, no one knows the details of her birth; she was simply there at the beginning of things, a grown woman or (if the fancy took her) a spider, full of magic. She liked to wander among the people, helping this person, teaching that one. Spider Woman was, in fact, helping the Pinon Maidens, along with Mole, when Kwataka, the Man-Eagle, first appeared.

Kwataka was a terrible monster, a merging, as his name implies, of bird and a human, with all the worst aspects of both. He killed for the joy of it. Kwataka stole women away, and then, when he grew bored with them, slew and ate them. Whenever Kwataka left his mountain lair he wore a magical shirt, a flint-arrowhead shirt that no weapon could pierce, so he had no fear of humans.

Now, Kwataka soared over the Hopi, just high enough over one particular village so that no one saw him, just low enough so he could watch one young woman who took his fancy. She was Lakone Mana, new wife of the young hero Puukonhoya, and husband and wife were very much in love.

Kwataka knew nothing of love. What he wanted, he took. He swooped down, snatched up Lakone Mana, and soared back up into the sky before anyone on the ground realized what had happened. Puukonhoya cried out his wife's name in anguish. Sighting Kwataka's path in the sky, the warrior ran after him as best he could. But what earthbound man could chase Kwataka?

But here sat Spider Woman with the Pinon Maidens. "Where are you going in such a rush, Puukonhoya?"

"Kwataka has stolen away my wife!"

"That is bad," Spider Woman agreed gently. "But it can be made better. I will help you. You, Pinon Maidens, gather pine resin. Make me an exact copy of Kwataka's flint-arrowhead shirt. Be quick about it!"

Sure enough, the Pinon Maidens quickly gathered the resin and quickly made an exact copy of the flint-arrowhead shirt. "Excellent!" Spider Woman said. "Mole, make ready. We will need your help as well."

Mole agreed.

Spider Woman sprinkled sacred corn pollen over the shirt, chanting an invocation; then she changed into her other true shape, becoming a tiny spider sitting on Puukonhoya's ear. "I'm here," she said in her now piping little voice. "Now, let us be off. Kwataka's lair is at the top of that mountain."

They reached the mountain, but Puukonhoya frowned with worry. "How can I get up there? I don't see any way to climb."

"No need," Spider Woman said in his ear. "Mole, dig us a tunnel, please."

Mole dug a tunnel into the mountain, sloping up and up. Puukonhoya, with Spider Woman on his ear, climbed up after Mole and found himself coming out of the mountain onto a ledge far above the ground. "But Kwataka's lair is higher still," Spider Woman said. "Now I shall call some good birds to help."

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Several came. An eagle carried Spider Woman, Puukonhoya, and Mole part of the way up. When the eagle wearied, a gray hawk took them higher still. When the gray hawk wearied, a red hawk took them higher still, right to the white house on the mountain peak that was Kwataka's lair. Spider Woman thanked the red hawk, as she had thanked the gray hawk and the eagle.

"Wait," she said to Puukonhoya, who was about to climb the ladder into the white house. "You can't climb that yet! The rungs are lined with sharp obsidian, like row after row of terrible knives."

"Then, what am I to do?"

"Wait for Horned Toad. Ah, here he is. Puukonhoya, pick some berries, please, and feed them to Horned Toad."

The young man did as Spider Woman instructed him. Horned Toad chewed the berries into a sticky paste. "Good," Spider Woman said. "Now, Puukonhoya, smear that paste on the ladder rungs. Be careful!"

He smeared the berry paste over the rungs, and the sharp edges were blunted. Puukonhoya rushed up the ladder, with Spider Woman on his ear and Mole hiding in his hair, and entered Kwataka's lair. "There's his flint-arrowhead shirt!"

"Softly!" Spider Woman warned. "Kwataka is home, asleep in another room. I will cast a spell to keep him from hearing you, but you must still be careful!"

Puukonhoya quickly switched the real flint-arrowhead shirt with the counterfeit, slipping on the real shirt. He stole into the next room, and there was Lakone Mana, her hands and feet bound. Her eyes flashed with joy and alarm, and she whispered, "You mustn't stay! He kills anyone who enters!"

"I'm not leaving without you," Puukonhoya said, and he cut her bonds.

But even though they were trying to be quiet, even though Spider Woman had cast that spell to keep Kwataka from hearing them, the Man-Eagle woke—and found himself facing Puukonhoya. "Who are you?" Kwataka asked sharply. "What are you doing here?"

"I am Puukonhoya, and I've come to rescue my wife!"

"Maybe you have and maybe you haven't," Kwataka snapped. "First, you must win her from me. You must win a smoking contest with me. Do you see this tobacco pouch? We will both smoke, and the first to faint loses. If I lose, you may take back your wife. If I win, you die!"

"That tobacco is poisonous to humans," Spider Woman whispered in Puukonhoya's ear, "and Kwataka knows it. Mole, dig us a hole, if you would."

Mole dug a hole right where Puukonhoya stood, an airhole to the outside world so that when the young man took his turn at the smoking pipe, fresh air kept his head clear. Kwataka had no such airhole, and so it was he who nearly fainted. Hastily, the Man-Eagle hurried outside to clear his head. How had the human managed that? How had the human won?

"So, you won the first contest," Kwataka snarled. "But that was only the first. There must be three."

Puukonhoya sighed. "If there must, there must. What is the second contest?"

"A simple thing," Kwataka said. "We shall each take up one of these great elk antlers. He who can break his antler with one snap wins."

"This is a trick," Spider Woman said to herself, and scuttled down to study the antlers.

Sure enough, the one intended for Kwataka was half rotten, ready to fall apart at a touch, while the one meant for Puukonhoya was as hard as stone. Spider Woman switched the two, so quickly and magically that Kwataka never suspected it. He snatched up what he thought was his antler and nearly tore his arms from their sockets trying to break it. Puukonhoya snapped the half-rotten antler with one slight twist of his hands.

Kwataka stared. How had the human done that? "Very well," the Man-Eagle muttered, "you have won the second contest. But the third remains!"

"What is the third contest?" Puukonhoya asked.

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"Do you see those two trees? Well, we both shall try to uproot them, leaves, branches, trunks, and all. The one who can lift his tree free wins. The tree on the left is mine," he added, picking the one that had the shallowest roots.

Spider Woman whispered to Mole, "Loosen the roots of the tree on the right. Hurry!"

Mole hurried. He did such a fine job that when Puukonhoya pulled, the tree came up almost easily. Kwataka, meanwhile, could hardly budge his tree at all.

"I win," Puukonhoya panted. "Now, let my wife go."

"Not so fast; not so fast!" Kwataka cried. "I am hungry after all this work, and so, I guess, are you. That shall be the final contest. Yes, the fourth contest will be it! We shall both eat, and whoever eats the most, wins!"

"Hurry," Spider Woman whispered to Mole; "dig a hole next to Puukonhoya!"

Puukonhoya did eat some of the food, since he really *was* hungry, but the rest of it he let fall into the hole, bit by bit, till his plate was clean. Kwataka never guessed a thing. At last, too full to eat another bite, Kwataka said, "Enough!"

"Can't eat any more?" Puukonhoya asked. "Now I'll take my wife and—"

"Not so fast!" Kwataka cried. "One last test; one last test! Which of us is invulnerable, eh? Which of us can stand in a fire unscathed?"

He gathered two great piles of wood. Kwataka sat on one, Puukonhoya on the other. "Now your wife can light them," the Man-Eagle said, "and we shall see who survives this!"

Nervously, Lakone Mana lit the fires. But, of course, Puukonhoya was wearing the magical flint-arrowhead shirt, while Kwataka had only the counterfeit. The magical shirt produced ice to keep Puukonhoya nicely cool, but the resin shirt burned up in a flash, and Kwataka burned with it.

"Quickly," Spider Woman said to Puukonhoya, "take this magical cornmeal in your mouth and blow it all over Kwataka's ashes."

Puukonhoya obeyed. And a handsome man rose from the ashes. Spider Woman turned back into her woman form and scolded him. "Have you learned your lesson? Have you?"

"I have," he who had been Kwataka murmured, like a little boy being scolded by his grandmother.

"Will you swear to stop killing people? Will you swear to stop carrying them off and eating them? Well? Will you swear that?"

"I swear it. I will never do evil deeds again."

"Then, that's that," Spider Woman said with satisfaction. "Now we can all go home."

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A Creation

An Iroquois Myth

Every culture has its creation myth, its myth of how things came to be. This myth, "A Creation," is from the Iroquois Confederacy (also known as the Five Nations), a group of five indigenous North American groups: the Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Cayuga, and Seneca. After the original confederacy was created, a sixth group, the Tuscarora, was added.

An unlimited expanse of water once filled the space inhabited by the world today. There was total darkness, and the human family dwelt in a country in the upper regions of the air, abounding in every comfort and convenience. The forests were full of game, the rivers full of fish, and fowl and vegetables grew abundantly. The Sun shone without fail, and storms were unknown. The people were happy, and death, pain, and disease were unknown to them. The people were without a care, until one day when anxiety was introduced to them.

A youth had become withdrawn. He became solitary and avoided his social circle as his body wasted away. By his face and countenance, it was certain something troubled him, but he would reveal nothing though his friends questioned him. At last, he agreed to tell. He would speak, however, only if they dug up the roots of a certain white pine tree and lay him on a blanket by the hole with his wife seated by his side.

Everyone eagerly complied with the strange request, and soon the great tree was uprooted, and the man and his wife placed by the hole, which opened into the great abyss below. Suddenly, to everyone's amazement and horror, he seized his pregnant wife, threw her through the hole, and told the people that he had long suspected his wife's chastity, but now that she was gone, he would soon recover.

Down the woman fell toward the watery world below. The loon first observed her falling and cried out that the council should meet to prepare for her coming. They knew that she was a human being and must have Earth to stand upon. First, they decided to find someone who could support her weight. The sea bear tried first and the other animals climbed on his back, but he sank beneath their weight. Several other animals tried and failed. At last, the turtle volunteered, and the animals were unable to sink him.

Next, the animals decided they must obtain Earth, which might be found at the bottom of the sea. The mink volunteered to seek Earth, and dove down below the water. After a long absence, he floated to the surface, dead. The animals, after inspecting him closely, found that clutched in his tiny paw was a small amount of dirt. They placed it on the turtle's back, and it began to grow as the woman from the sky continued to fall. By the time she landed, there was enough dirt for her to stand with one foot over the other, but soon there was room enough to stand on both feet, and soon after that, there was enough dirt for her to be seated. Earth continued to grow and grow, and soon there were plants, and plains, and rivers headed toward the sea.

The woman traveled toward the water and built a small dwelling. In a short while, she gave birth to a baby girl, and the two of them lived on the products of the earth until the girl became a woman. Then, animals changed themselves into the form of men and came as

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suitors to ask for the young woman's hand in marriage. First came the loon, in the form of a tall, well-dressed, attractive man, but after the woman consulted with her mother, this suitor was rejected. Others came, and they, too, were rejected. At last, the turtle came with his short neck, humped back, and bandy legs to offer himself as a suitor, and he was accepted.

After the young woman had gone to sleep, the turtle came and placed two arrows on her abdomen in the shape of a cross. One arrow was tipped with flint, and the other with the rough bark of a tree. Then the turtle left. Time passed, and the young woman became pregnant with twins. The twins spoke to each other about the best way to be born. The younger twin decided to exit the usual way, but the older wished instead to be born through his mother's side, thus taking her life.

The grandmother was enraged at her daughter's death and determined that she would destroy the twins in revenge. She grabbed the two of them and tossed them into the sea, but when she returned to her home, they had arrived before her at her own door. She threw them into the sea several more times, and finally decided that the two would live. Then, the grandmother divided her daughter's corpse into two sections and threw them into the sky. One part of her body became the Sun, and the other half became the Moon, and so day and night began.

The boys soon became men and excelled at archery. The older twin was called Than-wisk-a law (Flint) and had a malignant nature and the turtle's arrow pointed with flint. This son was a favorite with his grandmother. The younger twin was called Tan-lon-ghy-au-wan-goon and had a benevolent nature and the turtle's arrow headed with bark. The older son, with his flint-tipped arrow, lived in abundance with his grandmother but would share nothing with his younger brother, who could kill little with his bark-point arrow.

One day, Tan-lon-ghy-au-wan-goon was hunting, and his bark-tipped arrow flew wide of the mark and sank into the ocean. He followed it, hoping to recover the arrow, and found himself by a cottage at the bottom of the sea. An old man greeted him in front of the cottage and said, "Welcome, my son, to the home of your father." The old man offered Tan-lon-ghy-au-wan-goon an ear of corn, and told him he had witnessed his brother's behavior. While the older brother lived, he said, the world could never be peopled. Tan-lon-ghy-au-wan-goon must kill him.

His father instructed him to collect all the flint he could find into heaps, and hang up all the buck horns, as they were the only things that could affect his brother's body, which was made of flint. Tan-lon-ghy-au-wan-goon did so, and on a hunting excursion, he falsely told his brother that nothing affected him more than bulrushes and beech boughs, and asked him what he was most afraid of. Flint answered that only flint stones and buck horns could affect him.

The brothers had a meal, and Flint retired to his hut to rest. While he slept, his brother built a fire at the entrance. Soon, Flint found himself expanding with the heat. In his discomfort, he ran from the hut. Seeking revenge, he grabbed a beech bough to beat his brother, but to no effect. Tan-lon-ghy-au-wan-goon pelted Flint with flint stones and beat him with buck horns. Flint rushed at him armed with bulrushes, but these were unable to injure his younger brother. At last, Flint fled.

The land was at that time a vast green plain, but as Flint fled across it, deep valleys and high mountains were formed. Peaceful streams formed violent cataracts and foamed through rocky channels. Tan-lon-ghy-au-wan-goon followed Flint, beating him with buck horns until his brother breathed his last breath and fell to Earth, forming what are now the Rocky Mountains.

With the enemy of the turtles destroyed, the turtles came out of the earth in human form and multiplied over the years, living in peace and prosperity.

The grandmother was furious that her favorite had been destroyed and caused torrents of rain to descend upon Earth until even the highest mountains were below water. The

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inhabitants fled in their canoes to avoid destruction. At last, the grandmother caused the rain to cease and the waters to subside, and the inhabitants returned to their former homes. Then the angry grandmother covered Earth with snow. The inhabitants took to their snowshoes and avoided her vengeance.

At last, the grandmother gave up hope of destroying the entire race at one time and instead inflicted upon humankind all the evils that are suffered in the present world.

Tan-lon-ghy-au-wan-goon displays infinite benevolence by bestowing upon humankind an abundance of blessings.

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Balder

A Norse Myth

Balder was the most glorious of the Norse gods. He was fair of skin and hair, and so handsome and pure in spirit that none could equal him. The Norse god Balder may, in fact, be a later incarnation of a minor deity. The main myth about him, as retold here, reveals a Christian influence in its portrayal of Balder as more of a figure from a Christian story than a pagan Norse character. The myth also portrays Loki, the Norse trickster deity, as closer to a demonic figure than is usual for him.

Balder was the much-loved son of Odin and Frigga. Indeed, it seemed as though every creature that lived loved him. Yet Odin knew a sad prophesy. His son was fated to die an early death. To protect him and try to ward off the prophesy, Frigga traveled far and wide, speaking with all, whether they be living or mere objects, exacting promises from each and all not to harm Balder. Only the mistletoe was missed, and only the mistletoe never swore the vow.

But there was one who did not love Balder. Loki grew more and more jealous of the handsome young man who was so very pure and good. At last, Loki came to hate Balder, and he swore to destroy him. Loki searched, and at last found that one thing that could harm Balder, that one plant—that mistletoe.

Meanwhile, the Norse gods rejoiced to know that Balder was safe from all harm. He challenged them to throw whatever they would at him, knowing he would not be hurt.

While all the gods hurled things at Balder, Balder's blind brother, Hoder, sat by himself, unable to join in what he could not see. Loki slipped a sprig of mistletoe into Hoder's hand and offered to guide him. Blind Hoder threw the sprig—and it pierced Balder to the heart, slaying him on the spot.

Odin and Frigga mourned the death of their glorious son. They sent an envoy to Hel, goddess of the underworld and the dead, to ask whether Balder could be ransomed from her. Hel at last agreed, but only if all creation wept for the slain god. The gods sent out messengers throughout all creation, and all things wept for Balder—all but one old woman. It was Loki in disguise who refused to weep, so Balder was lost to death.

The gods took their revenge upon Loki. They bound him to a rock in a deep cave and set a poisonous serpent to drop venom on his face. Loki's faithful wife sat at his side, catching as much of the venom as she could in a cup. But whenever she had to empty the cup, the venom struck Loki, and his anguish caused earthquakes.

From then on, Loki allied himself against the gods, and he would fight against them when Ragnarok, the final battle, came.

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Thor Catches the Midgard Serpent

A Norse Myth

Thor was the Norse god of thunder, usually portrayed as a tall, muscular man, somewhat of a brawler compared to the more dignified deities. As a result, he was the chosen god of the common man. Thor was married, happily, to the golden-haired goddess Sif.

One day, Thor, god of thunder, took it into his head to go fishing. He disguised himself as a young man, left the gods' palace of Asgard, and wandered until night, when he met up with a giant named Hymir. Thor spent that night in Hymir's home.

When the day came, Hymir made ready to go fishing in the sea. Thor said, "Let me go rowing with you."

Hymir laughed. "What, such a scrap of a youngster go out on the open ocean? The cold and wet will make you catch cold if we row out as far as I usually do."

Thor promptly forgot all about his disguise, and let Hymir know his true identity. "I am well able to row a long way out, and it won't be me who first demands to be rowed back! Now, what are we going to use for bait?"

"Get your own," Hymir muttered.

So Thor went to a herd of oxen owned by Hymir, selected the largest ox, and struck off its head with his powerful hammer, Mjollnir. Taking the ox head with him, Thor climbed into Hymir's boat and rowed them both out with amazing speed.

"This is far enough," Hymir said.

"Not yet," Thor replied, and began rowing again.

"This is far enough!" Hymir repeated when Thor stopped. "We're so far out that we are in danger. The Midgard Serpent might surface under us! We're too far out!"

The Midgard Serpent was the enormous snake that encircled the globe underwater, and little did Hymir suspect that catching the serpent was Thor's goal.

"No, we're not," Thor replied, and once again began rowing.

Hymir wasn't at all pleased with this. He went right on complaining, until, at last, Thor said, "This is far enough."

Thor shipped his oars and prepared a strong fishing line and a stronger hook. Baiting the hook with the ox head, he cast the line and waited.

Sure enough, it wasn't long at all before the Midgard Serpent snapped at the ox-head bait—and got caught by the hook. It gave so powerful a jerk, trying to get free, that it nearly dragged Thor overboard. Thor dug in his heels so hard that his legs went right through the boat and his feet were braced on the bottom of the ocean. Hand over hand, he drew up the serpent till he was staring right at it. The Midgard Serpent stared right back, spitting poison.

"Have you gone mad?" Hymir cried in terror.

Thor merely raised his hammer, readying to strike the serpent over the head and finish it off. But Hymir was too frightened to think. Before Thor could strike, Hymir grabbed his bait knife and sliced the fishing line.

The Midgard Serpent dove back into the sea. Thor flung his hammer after it but missed.

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The Midgard Serpent is still down there, encircling the earth.

"I had to do it!" Hymir began.

He got no further. The furious Thor struck him a blow that hurled him overboard. By the time Hymir had floundered back aboard, Thor, god of thunder and frustrated fisherman, had waded ashore.

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Maui Snares the Sun

A Polynesian Myth

The Polynesian culture hero Maui is both hero and trickster. Half human, half god, he wanders much of the Pacific Ocean, particularly the islands of Hawaii—including Maui, the island that bears his name—setting matters right and enjoying himself hugely in the process.

Maui was special right from birth. He was not even created in the usual way. Maui's mother, Hina, began to fall asleep on the nice, warm sands of the island that would someday bear her son's name. Half asleep as she was, Hina didn't realize that the loincloth she'd pulled over herself wasn't hers, but belonged to a god.

And from the magic in that simple cloth, from that simple coming together of the human and the divine, Maui was begun.

Maui was more clever and daring than any child ever seen, and he began almost right away to make sure that the world ran the way it should. In those long-ago days, the Sun sped across the sky so quickly that Hina, Maui's mother, grew angry. She was a skillful maker of tapa, the cloth that is pounded out of mulberry bark—but the tapa needed to fully dry if it was to be of any use as cloth.

"I beat out my tapa," she told Maui, "but before it has even the slightest chance to dry, the Sun is gone from the sky, and the Sun's warmth with it."

Maui was still a child in those days, but he said as bravely as any man, "I will go and cut off the Sun's legs."

Hina glanced warily at him. She already knew that her son could do amazing deeds. "But are you strong enough?" Hina asked.

"Oh, I am," Maui answered boldly. "And I am clever enough, as well."

Hina believed him. Carefully, she told him what he must do; then she gave him fifteen strong ropes of coconut fiber and sent him on his way.

Maui had listened well to everything his mother had said. At last, as she had told him, he came to a huge wiliwili tree. In this tree, Maui knew, one of his ancestors lived, the old blind woman Wiliwilipuha, which means "hollow wiliwili." He sat at the foot of the tree and waited. The night came, and the night went, and a rooster began to crow. Once it crowed; twice it crowed; three times it crowed.

On the third crow, Maui tensed, watching to see what would happen next. An old woman came out of the wiliwili tree to cook bananas for the Sun's meal. This woman was Wiliwilipuha. As she lit her cooking fire, Maui snatched away the bananas.

"Humph!" Wiliwilipuha snorted in annoyance. "Where did the bananas go?"

She went to fetch more. But Maui stole these, too. A third time, Wiliwilipuha brought bananas to be cooked; a third time, Maui stole them.

"This must be the work of a troublemaker," Wiliwilipuha said, and sniffed the air until she found Maui. "Whose mischievous one are you?" the old woman asked.

"Yours," Maui answered.

"Mine? By whom?"

"By Hina," Maui answered. "I am your grandson, Grandmother."

Wiliwilipuha's old, strong face showed no emotion. "What brings you here?"

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"I've come to keep the Sun from racing across the sky. It runs so quickly that my mother's tapa cloth cannot dry."

"That would be a feat, indeed."

Wiliwilipuha gave Maui a sharp stone and one more rope. She told Maui that the Sun came there every morning for a breakfast of fried bananas.

Maui dug a pit in which to hide. He hadn't hidden there for long before the Sun came blazing to the wiliwili tree. Maui cast the first of his ropes—and he snared the Sun. Oh, it fought him! Oh, it burned at him! But Maui was small and quick, quicker almost than thought.

And quicker than thought, Maui used his sixteen ropes to bind the Sun and all its squirming legs. He bound it fast to the wiliwili tree, then picked up the stone.

"I will cut off your legs!" he threatened.

"No!" the Sun cried in terror. "Spare me!"

"Why? Why should I spare someone who is so selfish? You race across the sky to please yourself and think nothing of the folk below who need your light and warmth." Maui picked up the sharp stone again. "No, I shall cut off your legs."

"No!" the Sun screamed. "Maybe we can strike a bargain."

"Maybe we can." Maui pretended to be thinking things over. But his clever mind had already worked out what he wanted to say. "What if you go slowly across the sky—but only for half the year?"

"And for the other half?"

"For the other half of the year," Maui said, "you may go as swiftly as you please."

"I don't know. . . ."

Maui raised the stone once more.

"I agree!" the Sun shrieked. "We have a bargain."

Maui used the stone to cut the Sun free. The Sun shot back up into the sky.

And so it is that the days are short for half the year. Those are the days when the Sun races across the sky. But for the other half of the year, the Sun moves slowly, and that, or so this story says, is the work of Maui the clever.

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Inanna's Descent to the Underworld

An Ancient Sumerian Myth

Inanna was the Sumerian goddess of love and war, a very important goddess who was later known as Ishtar and Astarte. The story of Inanna and Dumuzi is the oldest form of the tale type known by the Greeks as "Venus and Adonis." But Inanna's descent and return also has a link to rituals of a shaman's voluntary (symbolic) death and rebirth.

There was the strongest love between the goddess Inanna, who is love and lust together, and the mortal Dumuzi. But mortals die, and gods may sometimes mourn. And, sometimes, some of them determine to do more than mourn. They will not let their lovers go.

Kurnugi is the land from which no one returns. It is the dark house wherein dwells Erkalla's god, the house wherein those who enter never leave, where dust is their only food and darkness their only way.

To Kurnugi, that land from which no one returns, that place of the dead, was great Inanna determined to go. No other god could stop her or persuade her otherwise.

When she arrived at the gate of Kurnugi, Inanna commanded, "Gatekeeper, open your gate for me! Let me come in! If you do not open the gate for me to come in, I shall smash the door and shatter the bolt; I shall raise up the dead, and they shall eat the living! The dead shall outnumber the living!"

The gatekeeper cried out, "Stop, lady; do not break it down! Let me go and report your words to Queen Ereshkigal."

The gatekeeper hurried to Queen Ereshkigal. "Inanna is here!"

When Ereshkigal heard this, her face turned as pale with anger as a cut-down tamarisk, while her lips turned as dark as a bruised kuninu-reed. "What drove her here to me? What impelled her spirit hither? I am as I should be! Should I drink water with the spirits of the dead? Should I eat clay for bread, drink muddy water for beer? Should I bemoan the men who left their wives behind? Should I bemoan the maidens wrenched from their lovers' laps? Or should I bemoan the tender babe sent off before his time?

"Go, Gatekeeper; open the gate for her," the queen concluded in a voice as cold as clay. "Let her enter. Treat her in accordance with the ancient rules."

The gatekeeper went and opened the gate to Inanna.

"Enter, my lady. May the palace of Kurnugi be glad to see you."

He let her in through the first door, but stripped off and took away the great crown from her head.

"Gatekeeper, why have you taken away the great crown from my head?"

"Go in, my lady. Such are the rites of the mistress of the underworld."

He let her in through the second door, but stripped off and took away her earrings.

"Gatekeeper, why have you taken away my earrings?"

"Go in, my lady. Such are the rites of the mistress of the underworld."

He let her in through the third door, but stripped off and took away the beads from around her neck.

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"Gatekeeper, why have you taken away the beads from around my neck?"

"Go in, my lady. Such are the rites of the mistress of the underworld."

He let her in through the fourth door, but stripped off and took away the ornaments from her breast.

"Gatekeeper, why have you taken away the ornaments from my breast?"

"Go in, my lady. Such are the rites of the mistress of the underworld."

He let her in through the fifth door, but stripped off and took away the girdle of birthstones from around her waist.

"Gatekeeper, why have you taken the girdle of birthstones from around my waist?"

"Go in, my lady. Such are the rites of the mistress of the underworld."

He let her in through the sixth door, but stripped off and took away the bangles from her wrists and ankles.

"Gatekeeper, why have you taken away the bangles from my wrists and ankles?"

"Go in my lady. Such are the rites of the mistress of the underworld."

He let her in through the seventh door, but stripped off and took away the robes from her body.

"Gatekeeper, why have you taken away the robes from my body?"

"Go in, my lady. Such are the rites of the mistress of the underworld."

Naked and unafraid, Inanna went down to Kurnugi. As soon as Inanna had descended to the Land of No Return, Ereshkigal saw her. Inanna, heedless of all but rage, flew at her, and the queen cried to her vizier:

Go, Namtar, lock her up in my palace!
Release against her the sixty miseries:
Misery of the eyes against her eyes,
Misery of the sides against her sides,
Misery of the heart against her heart,
Misery of the feet against her feet,
Misery of the head against her head—
Against every part of her, against her whole body!

Now, back in the mortal realm sadness reigned, for there could be no love or lust with Inanna gone to the underworld. The bull ignored the cow; the boy and girl ignored each other; the man slept in one room and the woman in another.

Papsukkal, vizier of the great gods, hung his head. Dressed in mourning clothes, his hair unkempt, he went before the gods and wept.

"Inanna has gone down to the underworld and has not come up again."

The wise god Ea created a person, an image, Asushunamir, which means "good looks."

"Go, Asushunamir, set thy face to the gate of the Land of No Return. The seven gates of the Land of No Return shall be opened for thee. Ereshkigal shall see thee and rejoice. When her heart has calmed, and her mood is happy, let her utter the oath of the great gods.

"Then ask her this: 'Pray, lady, let them give me the life-water bag so that I may drink from it.' "

So he went, and so it happened. As soon as Ereshkigal heard his request, she struck her thigh and bit her finger, restless with worry. "You have asked of me something that should not be asked. Asushunamir, I will curse thee with a mighty curse!"

The food of the city's gutters shall be thy food;
The sewers of the city shall be thy drink.
The threshold shall be thy habitation;
The besotted and the thirsty shall smite thy cheek!

She knew that as soon as Asushunamir was hers, she must keep a balance by returning Inanna. She did not know that Asushunamir was a mere image, not reality.

So Ereshkigal told her vizier, Namtar, "Sprinkle Inanna with the water of life and take her from my sight!"

And Namtar sprinkled Inanna with the water of life and took her from the queen's presence.

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When through the first gate he had made her go out, he returned to her the robes for her body.

When through the second gate he had made her go out, he returned to her the bangles for her wrists and ankles.

When through the third gate he had made her go out, he returned to her the girdle of birthstones for her waist.

When through the fourth gate he had made her go out, he returned to her the ornaments for her breast.

When through the fifth gate he had made her go out, he returned to her the beads for her neck.

When through the sixth gate he had made her go out, he returned to her the earrings for her ears.

When through the seventh gate he had made her go out, he returned to her the great crown for her head.

But Inanna knew her rebirth was not in vain. As she was reborn, so would Dumuzi return to her every spring.

"You shall not rob me forever of my only love!" And so indeed, they did not.

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Prince Wicked and the Grateful Animals

A Parable from the *Jataka*

"Prince Wicked and the Grateful Animals" is a prime example of the "grateful animals" folk motif, in which animals that are helped by a human repay the kindness in turn. The *Jataka,* or *Jatakas,* is a collection of moral tales of the previous lives of the Buddha. They are said to have been compiled sometime between the third century B.C.E. and the fifth century C.E.

Once upon a time, a king had a son named Prince Wicked. He was fierce and cruel, and he spoke to nobody without abuse or blows. Like grit in the eye was Prince Wicked to everyone, both in the palace and out of it.

His people said to one another, "If he acts this way while he is a prince, how will he act when he is king?"

One day when the prince was swimming in the river, suddenly, a great storm came on, and it grew very dark. In the darkness, the servants who were with the prince swam from him, saying to themselves, "Let us leave him alone in the river, and he may drown."

When they reached the shore, some of the servants who had not gone into the river said, "Where is Prince Wicked?"

"Isn't he here?" the prince's attendants asked. "Perhaps he came out of the river in the darkness and went home." Then, the servants all went back to the palace.

The king asked where his son was, and again the servants said, "Isn't he here, O King? A great storm came on soon after we went into the water. It grew very dark. When we came out of the water, the prince was not with us."

At once, the king had the gates thrown open. He and all his men searched up and down the banks of the river for the missing prince. But no trace of him could be found.

In the darkness, the prince had been swept down the river. He was crying for fear he would drown when he came across a log. He climbed up on the log and floated farther down the river.

When the great storm arose, the water rushed into the homes of a rat and a snake who lived on the riverbank. The rat and the snake swam out into the river and found the same log the prince had found. The snake climbed up on one end of the log, and the rat climbed up on the other.

On the river's bank, a cottonwood tree grew, and a young parrot lived in its branches. The storm pulled up this tree, and it fell into the river. The heavy rain beat down the parrot when it tried to fly, and it could not go far. Looking down, it saw the log and flew down to rest. Now, there were four on the log floating downstream together.

Just around the bend in the river, a certain poor man had built himself a hut. As he walked to and fro late at night listening to the storm, he heard the loud cries of the prince. The poor man said to himself, "I must get that man out of the water. I must save his life." So he shouted, "I will save you! I will save you!" as he swam out in the river.

Soon, he reached the log, and pushing it by one end, he soon pushed it into the bank. The prince jumped up and down, he was so glad to be safe and sound on dry land.

Then the poor man saw the snake, the rat, and the parrot, and he carried them to his hut. He built a fire and put the animals near it so

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they could get dry. He took care of them first, because they were the weaker, and afterward he looked after the comfort of the prince.

Then, the poor man brought food and set it before them, looking after the animals first and the prince afterward. This made the young prince angry, and he said to himself, "This poor man does not treat me like a prince. He takes care of the animals before taking care of me." Then, the prince began to hate the poor man.

A few days later, when the prince, the snake, the rat, and the parrot were rested and the storm was all over, the snake said good-bye to the poor man with these words: "Father, you have been very kind to me. I know where there is some buried gold. If ever you want gold, you have only to come to my home and call, 'Snake!' and I will show you the buried gold. It shall all be yours."

Next, the rat said good-bye to the poor man. "If ever you want money," said the rat, "come to my home and call out, 'Rat!' and I will show you where a great deal of money is buried near my home. It shall all be yours."

Then the parrot went to the poor man, saying: "Father, silver and gold have I none, but if you ever want choice rice, come to where I live and call, 'Parrot!' and I will call all my family and friends together, and we will gather the choicest rice in the fields for you."

Last came the prince. In his heart, he hated the poor man who had saved his life. But he pretended to be as thankful as the animals had been, saying, "Come to me when I am king, and I will give you great riches." So saying, he went away.

Not long after this, the prince's father died, and Prince Wicked was made king. He was then very rich.

By and by, the poor man said to himself, "Each of the four whose lives I saved made a promise to me. I will see if they will keep their promises."

First of all, he went to the snake, and standing near his hole, the poor man called out, "Snake!"

At once, the snake darted forth, and with every mark of respect he said, "Father, in this place there is much gold. Dig it up and take it all."

"Very well," said the poor man. "When I need it, I will not forget."

After visiting for a while, the poor man said good-bye to the snake and went to where the rat lived, calling out, "Rat!"

The rat came at once and did as the snake had done, showing the poor man where the money was buried.

"When I need it, I will come for it," said the poor man.

Going next to the parrot, the poor man called out, "Parrot!" and the bird flew down from the treetop as soon as he heard the call.

"Oh, Father," said the parrot, "shall I call together all my family and friends to gather choice rice for you?"

The poor man, seeing that the parrot was willing and ready to keep his promise, said, "I do not need rice now. If ever I do, I will not forget your offer."

Last of all, the poor man went into the city where the king lived. The king, seated on his great white elephant, was riding through the city. The king saw the poor man and said to himself, "That poor man has come to ask me for the great riches I promised to give him. I must have his head cut off before he can tell the people how he saved my life when I was the prince."

So the king called his servants to him and said, "You see that poor man over there? Seize him and bind him, beat him at every corner of the street as you march him out of the city, and then chop off his head."

The servants had to obey their king. So they seized and bound the poor man. They beat him at every corner of the street. The poor man did not cry out, but he said, over and over again, "It is better to save poor, weak animals than to save a prince."

At last, some wise men among the crowds along the street asked the poor man what prince he had saved. Then, the poor man told the whole story, ending with the words, "By

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saving your king, I brought all this pain upon myself."

The wise men and all the rest of the crowd cried out, "This poor man saved the life of our king, and now the king has ordered him to be killed. How can we be sure that he will not have any, or all, of us killed? Let us kill him." And in their anger, they rushed from every side upon the king as he rode on his elephant, and, with arrows and stones, they killed him then and there.

Then, they made the poor man king, and set him to rule over them.

The poor man ruled his people well. One day, he decided once more to try the snake, the rat, and the parrot. So, followed by many servants, the king went to where the snake lived.

At the call of "Snake!" out came the snake from his hole, saying, "Here, O King, is your treasure; take it."

"I will," said the king. "And I want you to come with me."

Then, the king had his servants dig up the gold.

Going to where the rat lived, the king called, "Rat!" Out came the rat, and bowing low to the king, the rat said, "Take all the money buried here and have your servants carry it away."

"I will," said the king, and he asked the rat to go with him and the snake.

Then, the king went to where the parrot lived, and called, "Parrot!" The parrot flew down to the king's feet and said, "O King, shall I and my family and my friends gather choice rice for you?"

"Not now, not until rice is needed," said the king. "Will you come with us?" The parrot was glad to join them.

So with the gold and the money, and with the snake, the rat, and the parrot as well, the king went back to the city.

The king had the gold and the money hidden away in the palace. He had a tube of gold made for the snake to live in. He had a glass box made for the rat's home, and a cage of gold for the parrot. Each had the food he liked best of all to eat every day, and so these four lived happily all their lives.

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The Lady, or the Tiger?

An American Riddle Tale

The story "The Lady, or the Tiger?" is perhaps the most classic example of a riddle tale, a story with an ending left to the audience to debate. It was written in 1884 by American author and humorist Frank R. Stockton (1834–1902).

In the very olden time there lived a semi-barbaric king, whose ideas, though somewhat polished and sharpened by the progressiveness of distant Latin neighbors, were still large, florid, and untrammeled, as became the half of him which was barbaric. He was a man of exuberant fancy, and, withal, of an authority so irresistible that, at his will, he turned his varied fancies into facts. He was greatly given to self-communing, and, when he and himself agreed upon anything, the thing was done. When every member of his domestic and political systems moved smoothly in its appointed course, his nature was bland and genial; but, whenever there was a little hitch, and some of his orbs got out of their orbits, he was blander and more genial still, for nothing pleased him so much as to make the crooked straight and crush down uneven places.

Among the borrowed notions by which his barbarism had become semified was that of the public arena, in which, by exhibitions of manly and beastly valor, the minds of his subjects were refined and cultured.

But even here the exuberant and barbaric fancy asserted itself. The arena of the king was built, not to give the people an opportunity of hearing the rhapsodies of dying gladiators, nor to enable them to view the inevitable conclusion of a conflict between religious opinions and hungry jaws, but for purposes far better adapted to widen and develop the mental energies of the people. This vast amphitheater, with its encircling galleries, its mysterious vaults, and its unseen passages, was an agent of poetic justice, in which crime was punished, or virtue rewarded, by the decrees of an impartial and incorruptible chance.

When a subject was accused of a crime of sufficient importance to interest the king, public notice was given that on an appointed day the fate of the accused person would be decided in the king's arena, a structure which well deserved its name, for, although its form and plan were borrowed from afar, its purpose emanated solely from the brain of this man, who, every barleycorn a king, knew no tradition to which he owed more allegiance than pleased his fancy, and who ingrafted on every adopted form of human thought and action the rich growth of his barbaric idealism.

When all the people had assembled in the galleries, and the king, surrounded by his court, sat high up on his throne of royal state on one side of the arena, he gave a signal, a door beneath him opened, and the accused subject stepped out into the amphitheater. Directly opposite him, on the other side of the inclosed space, were two doors, exactly alike and side by side. It was the duty and the privilege of the person on trial to walk directly to these doors and open one of them. He could open either door he pleased; he was subject to no guidance or influence but that of the aforementioned impartial and incorruptible chance. If he opened the one, there came out of it a hungry tiger, the fiercest and most cruel that could be procured, which immediately sprang upon him and tore him to pieces as

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a punishment for his guilt. The moment that the case of the criminal was thus decided, doleful iron bells were clanged, great wails went up from the hired mourners posted on the outer rim of the arena, and the vast audience, with bowed heads and downcast hearts, wended slowly their homeward way, mourning greatly that one so young and fair, or so old and respected, should have merited so dire a fate.

But, if the accused person opened the other door, there came forth from it a lady, the most suitable to his years and station that his majesty could select among his fair subjects, and to this lady he was immediately married, as a reward of his innocence. It mattered not that he might already possess a wife and family, or that his affections might be engaged upon an object of his own selection; the king allowed no such subordinate arrangements to interfere with his great scheme of retribution and reward. The exercises, as in the other instance, took place immediately, and in the arena. Another door opened beneath the king, and a priest, followed by a band of choristers, and dancing maidens blowing joyous airs on golden horns and treading an epithalamic measure, advanced to where the pair stood, side by side, and the wedding was promptly and cheerily solemnized. Then the gay brass bells rang forth their merry peals, the people shouted glad hurrahs, and the innocent man, preceded by children strewing flowers on his path, led his bride to his home.

This was the king's semi-barbaric method of administering justice. Its perfect fairness is obvious. The criminal could not know out of which door would come the lady; he opened either he pleased, without having the slightest idea whether, in the next instant, he was to be devoured or married. On some occasions the tiger came out of one door, and on some out of the other. The decisions of this tribunal were not only fair, they were positively determinate: The accused person was instantly punished if he found himself guilty, and, if innocent, he was rewarded on the spot, whether he liked it or not. There was no escape from the judgments of the king's arena.

The institution was a very popular one. When the people gathered together on one of the great trial days, they never knew whether they were to witness a bloody slaughter or a hilarious wedding. This element of uncertainty lent an interest to the occasion which it could not otherwise have attained. Thus, the masses were entertained and pleased, and the thinking part of the community could bring no charge of unfairness against this plan, for did not the accused person have the whole matter in his own hands?

This semi-barbaric king had a daughter as blooming as his most florid fancies, and with a soul as fervent and imperious as his own. As is usual in such cases, she was the apple of his eye, and was loved by him above all humanity. Among his courtiers was a young man of that fineness of blood and lowness of station common to the conventional heroes of romance who love royal maidens. This royal maiden was well satisfied with her lover, for he was handsome and brave to a degree unsurpassed in all this kingdom, and she loved him with an ardor that had enough of barbarism in it to make it exceedingly warm and strong. This love affair moved on happily for many months, until one day the king happened to discover its existence. He did not hesitate nor waver in regard to his duty in the premises. The youth was immediately cast into prison, and a day was appointed for his trial in the king's arena. This, of course, was an especially important occasion, and his majesty, as well as all the people, was greatly interested in the workings and development of this trial. Never before had such a case occurred; never before had a subject dared to love the daughter of the king. In after years such things became commonplace enough, but then they were in no slight degree novel and startling.

The tiger cages of the kingdom were searched for the most savage and relentless beasts, from which the fiercest monster might be selected for the arena; and the ranks of maiden youth and beauty throughout the land were carefully surveyed by competent judges

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in order that the young man might have a fitting bride in case fate did not determine for him a different destiny. Of course, everybody knew that the deed with which the accused was charged had been done. He had loved the princess, and neither he, she, nor any one else, thought of denying the fact; but the king would not think of allowing any fact of this kind to interfere with the workings of the tribunal, in which he took such great delight and satisfaction. No matter how the affair turned out, the youth would be disposed of, and the king would take an aesthetic pleasure in watching the course of events, which would determine whether or not the young man had done wrong in allowing himself to love the princess.

The appointed day arrived. From far and near the people gathered, and thronged the great galleries of the arena, and crowds, unable to gain admittance, massed themselves against its outside walls. The king and his court were in their places, opposite the twin doors, those fateful portals, so terrible in their similarity.

All was ready. The signal was given. A door beneath the royal party opened, and the lover of the princess walked into the arena. Tall, beautiful, fair, his appearance was greeted with a low hum of admiration and anxiety. Half the audience had not known so grand a youth had lived among them. No wonder the princess loved him! What a terrible thing for him to be there!

As the youth advanced into the arena he turned, as the custom was, to bow to the king, but he did not think at all of that royal personage. His eyes were fixed upon the princess, who sat to the right of her father. Had it not been for the moiety of barbarism in her nature it is probable that lady would not have been there, but her intense and fervid soul would not allow her to be absent on an occasion in which she was so terribly interested. From the moment that the decree had gone forth that her lover should decide his fate in the king's arena, she had thought of nothing, night or day, but this great event and the various subjects connected with it. Possessed of more power, influence, and force of character than any one who had ever before been interested in such a case, she had done what no other person had done,—she had possessed herself of the secret of the doors. She knew in which of the two rooms, that lay behind those doors, stood the cage of the tiger, with its open front, and in which waited the lady. Through these thick doors, heavily curtained with skins on the inside, it was impossible that any noise or suggestion should come from within to the person who should approach to raise the latch of one of them. But gold, and the power of a woman's will, had brought the secret to the princess.

And not only did she know in which room stood the lady ready to emerge, all blushing and radiant, should her door be opened, but she knew who the lady was. It was one of the fairest and loveliest of the damsels of the court who had been selected as the reward of the accused youth, should he be proved innocent of the crime of aspiring to one so far above him; and the princess hated her. Often had she seen, or imagined that she had seen, this fair creature throwing glances of admiration upon the person of her lover, and sometimes she thought these glances were perceived, and even returned. Now and then she had seen them talking together; it was but for a moment or two, but much can be said in a brief space; it may have been on most unimportant topics, but how could she know that? The girl was lovely, but she had dared to raise her eyes to the loved one of the princess; and, with all the intensity of the savage blood transmitted to her through long lines of wholly barbaric ancestors, she hated the woman who blushed and trembled behind that silent door.

When her lover turned and looked at her, and his eye met hers as she sat there, paler and whiter than any one in the vast ocean of anxious faces about her, he saw, by that power of quick perception which is given to those whose souls are one, that she knew behind which door crouched the tiger, and behind which stood the lady. He had expected her to know it. He understood her nature, and his soul was assured that she would never rest until she had made

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plain to herself this thing, hidden to all other lookers-on, even to the king. The only hope for the youth in which there was any element of certainty was based upon the success of the princess in discovering this mystery; and the moment he looked upon her, he saw she had succeeded, as in his soul he knew she would succeed.

Then it was that his quick and anxious glance asked the question: "Which?" It was as plain to her as if he shouted it from where he stood. There was not an instant to be lost. The question was asked in a flash; it must be answered in another.

Her right arm lay on the cushioned parapet before her. She raised her hand, and made a slight, quick movement toward the right. No one but her lover saw her. Every eye but his was fixed on the man in the arena.

He turned, and with a firm and rapid step he walked across the empty space. Every heart stopped beating, every breath was held, every eye was fixed immovably upon that man. Without the slightest hesitation, he went to the door on the right, and opened it.

Now, the point of the story is this: Did the tiger come out of that door, or did the lady?

The more we reflect upon this question, the harder it is to answer. It involves a study of the human heart which leads us through devious mazes of passion, out of which it is difficult to find our way. Think of it, fair reader, not as if the decision of the question depended upon yourself, but upon that hot-blooded, semi-barbaric princess, her soul at a white heat beneath the combined fires of despair and jealousy. She had lost him, but who should have him?

How often, in her waking hours and in her dreams, had she started in wild horror, and covered her face with her hands as she thought of her lover opening the door on the other side of which waited the cruel fangs of the tiger!

But how much oftener had she seen him at the other door! How in her grievous reveries had she gnashed her teeth, and torn her hair, when she saw his start of rapturous delight as he opened the door of the lady! How her soul had burned in agony when she had seen him rush to meet that woman, with her flushing cheek and sparkling eye of triumph; when she had seen him lead her forth, his whole frame kindled with the joy of recovered life; when she had heard the glad shouts from the multitude, and the wild ringing of the happy bells; when she had seen the priest, with his joyous followers, advance to the couple, and make them man and wife before her very eyes; and when she had seen them walk away together upon their path of flowers, followed by the tremendous shouts of the hilarious multitude, in which her one despairing shriek was lost and drowned!

Would it not be better for him to die at once, and go to wait for her in the blessed regions of semi-barbaric futurity?

And yet, that awful tiger, those shrieks, that blood!

Her decision had been indicated in an instant, but it had been made after days and nights of anguished deliberation. She had known she would be asked, she had decided what she would answer, and, without the slightest hesitation, she had moved her hand to the right. The question of her decision is one not to be lightly considered, and it is not for me to presume to set myself up as the one person able to answer it. And so I leave it with all of you: Which came out of the opened door,—the lady, or the tiger?

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Storytelling Resources

Worldwide List of Courses In and/or About Storytelling at Colleges and Universities

This list began in 1998 when Eric Miller, then a doctoral student in folklore at the University of Pennsylvania, felt there was a need for such a list and began compiling it. In 2002, Miller embarked on two years of fieldwork in south India and passed on compiling duties to Millie Jackson. Jackson, who had earned a Ph.D. from Michigan State University, began studies in storytelling at East Tennessee State University during her sabbatical in 2004; updating the list became part of her research on storytelling. Although Miller is now settled in Chennai, on India's southeast coast, Jackson continues to update the list, which is accessible at http://shesig.pbwiki.com.

Both of these scholars believe that storytelling studies is an interdisciplinary field of study, or a discipline unto itself. For introductions to storytelling studies, please see Miller's comments at http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/storytelling/definition.html and the *Storytelling, Self, and Society*'s editorial policy statement at http://www.courses.unt.edu/efiga/SSS/SSS_Journal.htm.

The full text of what is considered to be a founding article of storytelling studies, "Once Upon a Time: An Introduction to the Inaugural Issue," by Joseph Sobol, John S. Gentile, and Sunwolf, can be found at http://www.courses.unt.edu/efiga/SSS/IntroInauguralIssueSSSJournal.htm.

The following list includes courses in a number of disciplines; international offerings are listed first, followed by courses offered by universities within the United States. The address, specific contact information, website, and a brief description are given for each program as applicable. Note that many courses are taught by adjuncts and are not taught every semester; check with the university to determine the status of current courses and future offerings.

Australia

Parsifal College (a Rudolf Steiner training college), Sydney
P.O. Box 231, West Pennant Hills
Sydney 2125
Australia
Phone: +61 (0) 2 9680 9533
Courses: Storytelling for Early Childhood Teachers, and Storytelling and Puppetry.

Southern Cross University
P.O. Box 157
Lismore, NSW 2480
Australia
http://www.scu.edu.au/index.php
Course: ENG 355: Storytelling: Emphasizes the importance of storytelling as a method of transmitting culture, and enables students to enjoy, prepare, and tell stories to children.

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Canada

Cape Breton University
Folklore (Community Studies)
P.O. Box 5300, 1250 Grand Lake Road
Sydney, Nova Scotia, B1P 6L2
Canada
Contact: Afra Kavanagh,
afra_kavanagh@uccb.ca
http://faculty.cbu.ca/afrak/storytelling/default.htm
Offers courses and sponsors annual Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) Storytelling Symposium.

Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's
Department of Folklore
St. John's, Newfoundland A1C 5S7
Canada
Phone: 709-737-8402
Contact: folklore@morgan.ucs.mun.ca
http://www.mun.ca/folklore/
Offers courses in folk literature, folk tales, and mythology.

University of Alberta, Edmonton
School of Library and Information Studies
3-20 Rutherford South
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2J4
Canada
Contact: Gail de Vos,
storyteller.devos@telusplanet.net
http://www.slis.ualberta.ca/

Germany

Richard Martin
Bornstrasse 83 Darmstadt
Phone: +49 (0) 6151 377 175
Contact: info@tellatale.eu
www.tellatale.eu
Offers teacher training workshops in "Using Storytelling in the Classroom" at various universities in Germany and other countries.

United Kingdom

Artemis School of Speech and Drama
Perdue Centre for the Arts
West Hoathly Road
East Grinstead, West Sussex RH19 4NF
England, UK
Phone: +44 (0) 1342 321330
Contact: Christopher Garvey, Director
http://www.artemisspeechanddrama.org.uk/

Emerson College (Rudolf Steiner College)
School for Storytelling
Forest Row
East Sussex RH18 5JX
England, UK
Contact: Ashley Ramsden, Director
http://www.emerson.org.uk/index.php?id=21
Courses are offered full time, part time, and on weekends.

University of Kent
School of Drama, Film and Visual Art
Canterbury CT2 7NB
England, UK
Contact: Vayu Naidu
http://www.kent.ac.uk/sdfva/
Applicable courses are related to performance and cinema.

University of Glamorgan
Drama
Pontypridd, CF37 1DL
Wales, UK
Phone: +44 (0) 1443 482693
Contact: Mike Wilson, mwilson@glam.ac.uk
Courses are offered through the Drama department and as part of the continuing education program. Opportunities for independent study also are available at the graduate level.

University of Glasgow
Dumfries Campus
Rutherford McCowan Buildings
Dumfries DG1 4ZL
Scotland, UK
Contact: Tom Pow, t.pow@crichton.gla.ac.uk
http://www.cc.gla.ac.uk/layer2/creativeculture.htm
Courses in storytelling offered through the Creative and Cultural Studies Program.

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United States

Note: Additional lists of U.S. higher education Folklore and Folklife programs are kept by the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress Research Center (http://www.loc.gov/folklife/source/grad.html) and the American Folklore Society (http://www.afsnet.org/aboutfolklore/wherestudyFL.cfm).

Alaska

University of Alaska, Fairbanks
Alaska Native Studies Program
319 Brooks Building
Fairbanks, AK 99775-6300
Phone: 907-474-7181
http://www.uaf.edu/ans/index.html
Selected courses included storytelling by indigenous cultures.

Arizona

Glendale Community College
Building 02, Room 121
6000 West Olive Avenue
Glendale, AZ 85302
Phone: 623-845-3686
Contact: Joyce Story,
Joyce.story@gcmail.maricopa.edu
Course: The Art of Storytelling.

South Mountain Community College
Storytelling Institute in the Communications and Fine Arts Division
7050 South 24th Street
Phoenix, AZ 85040
Phone: 602-243-8000
Contacts: Lorraine Calbow; LynnAnn Wojciechowicz; Liz Warren, liz.warren@smcmail.maricopa.edu.
http://eport.maricopa.edu/published/l/yn/lynnannw/home/1/
The Storytelling Program of Study involves six required courses and various electives. Students need not be matriculated in a B.A. program. Courses include: The Art of Storytelling, Life Stories, Multicultural Folktales, Mythology, Using Story in Business Settings, Using Story in Educational Settings, and Using Story in Healing Settings.

California

Antelope Valley College
Communication Arts
3041 West Avenue K
Lancaster, CA 93536
Phone: 661-722-6300, ext. 6477
Contact: Debra Olson Tolar, dtolar@avc.edu

California State University, Los Angeles
Charter College of Education
Division of Curriculum and Instruction
King Hall D2069
Los Angeles, CA 90032
Contact: Ambika Gopalakrishnan,
agopala@calstatela.edu
http://www.calstatela.edu/academic/ccoe/
This university offers courses in storytelling, digital storytelling, and folklore. Certificate in Storytelling: This program is designed for persons with an interest in the techniques, theories, and literature associated with the ancient and modern art of storytelling. The certificate is valuable for teacher use in language arts instruction and for improving communications skills; it also can be used effectively by librarians and recreation leaders. This program is open to matriculated, upper division undergraduate and postbaccalaureate students. Completion of this credit certificate program requires thirty-two units in core and elective courses.

Chapman University College
Professional Development Center
3001 Lava Ridge Court
Roseville, CA 95661
Phone: 916-984-6248
Contact: Susan M. Osborn,
sosborn@ix.netcom.com

San Jose State University
Television, Radio, Film, Theatre
One Washington Square
San Jose, CA 95192-0098

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Phone: 408-924-4568
Contact: Beverly Swanson, Beverly1007@aol.com
Theater Arts 131: Storytelling & Creative Dramatics.

University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)
Information Studies
220GSE&IS
Los Angeles, CA 90095
Phone: 310-206-9363
Contact: Virginia Walter, vwalter@ucla.edu
www.ucla.edu

Connecticut

The Graduate Institute
701 North Street
Milford, CT 06460
Phone: 203-874-4252; 860-701-7708
Contacts: Wendy Cook, Robin Moore, graduateinstitute@learn.edu
www.learn.edu/ot/
Offers a Master of Arts degree in Oral Traditions.

Southern Connecticut State University
School of Communication, Information and Library Science
501 Crescent Street
New Haven, CT 06575
Phone: 203-392-5711
Contact: Gwendolin Nowlan, Director, nowlan@scsu.ctstate.edu
http://www.southernct.edu/programs/storytelling
Offers a master's program in Oral Tradition. Courses include: Fostering the Multiple Intelligences through the Oral Tradition, Historical and Cultural Integration of Music and Oral Tradition, History and Development of the Folktale in the Oral Tradition, History and Development of the Oral Tradition, Integrating Enhanced Learning Techniques and Movement into the Oral Tradition, Integrating the Oral Tradition into the Elementary Curriculum, Integrating the Oral Tradition into the Middle and High School Curriculum, Methods of Storytelling for the Elementary School, The Oral Tradition in Ancient and Modern Mythology, Storytelling in Art and Legend, and Storytelling in Art and Technique. The school also offers special programs, field projects, and independent studies in storytelling.

University of Bridgeport
School of Education and Human Resources
Carlson Hall
303 University Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06604
Contact: Connie Rockman, connie.rock@snet.net
Course: Storytelling for Teachers.

Florida

Florida Atlantic University
South Florida Storytelling Project
Communications
777 Glades Road
Boca Raton, FL 33431
Phone: 561-297-0042
Contact: Caren S. Neile, cneile@fau.edu, carenina@bellsouth.net
http://www.fau.edu/storytelling/index.htm

Georgia

Kennesaw State University
Department of Theatre and Performance Studies
1000 Chastain Road, Box #3103
Kennesaw State University
Kennesaw, GA 30144
Phone: 770-423-6338
Contacts: John S. Gentile (Chair), jgentile@kennesaw.edu; Hannah B. Harvey, hharvey3@kennesaw.edu
http://www.kennesaw.edu/theatre/monkeyking/
Courses: 1) Storytelling I: Folktale and Legend: The study of folk narrative forms of folktale and legend through storytelling performance. Introduces student to folkloristics as a field of study; to the nature, structure, and function of narrative; and to the aesthetics, methods, and practice of storytelling. 2) Storytelling II: Myth and Epic: The study of

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folk narrative forms of myth and epic through storytelling performance. Introduces students to the various approaches to the study and interpretation of world mythologies and to the aesthetics, methods, and practice of storytelling.

Hawaii

University of Hawaii, Manoa
Academy for Creative Media
2550 Campus Road
Honolulu, HI 96822
Contact: Chris Lee, Chair, Academy for Creative Media, cpl@hawaii.edu
http://acm.hawaii.edu/
Courses in Storytelling and Story Theater.

Illinois

Dominican University
Graduate School of Library and Information Science
Crown 323, 7900 West Division Street
River Forest, IL 60305
Phone: 708-524-6871
Contact: Janice M. Del Negro, jdelnegro@dom.edu
Course: Storytelling for Adults & Children.

Northern Illinois University
School of Theatre and Dance
Dekalb, IL 60115
Phone: 815-753-8074
Contact: Patricia Ridge, pridge@niu.edu
http://www.vpa.niu.edu/theatre.html

Northwestern University
Department of Theatre, in the School of Speech
Chicago and Evanston, IL
Phone: 847-491-3163
Contact: Rives Collins, r-collins@nwu.edu
Courses include Adapting Folk Tales and Other Sources, and Intensive Coaching for Storytellers.

University of Illinois
Graduate School of Library and Information Studies
501 East Daniel
Champaign, IL 61820
Phone: 217-244-7451
Contact: Betsy Hearne, ehearne@uiuc.edu
http://www.lis.uiuc.edu/~hearne/
Courses offered in person and online through LEEP (an online scheduling option).

Indiana

Indiana University
School of Library and Information Science
755 West Michigan Street, UL 3100N
Indianapolis, IN 46202-5195
Contact: Hope Baugh, bryteller@yahoo.com
http://www.slis.iupui.edu/
Course: S603: Workshop in Youth Services Librarianship—Storytelling (1.5 credits). The course is a special topics course taught by several instructors in various locations around Indiana.

Indiana University
Department of Folklore, M.A. and Ph.D.
504 North Fess
Bloomington, IN 47405
Phone: 812-855-0395
Contact: Richard Bauman, bauman@indiana.edu

Iowa

University of Iowa
College of Education
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Program in Literature, Science & the Arts
13-E North Hall
Iowa City, IA 52242
Phone: 319-335-3011
Contact: Steve McGuire, s-mcguire@uiowa.edu

Kentucky

Western Kentucky University
Folk Narrative
Department of Folk Studies and Anthropology
Bowling Green, KY 42101

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Phone: 270-745-5896
Contact: Chris Antonsen,
Chris.antonsen@wku.edu

Louisiana

Lousiana State University
School of Library and Information Science
276 Coates Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
Phone: 225-578-1467
Contact: Dr. Margie J. Thomas, Faculty Coordinator, Mthom39@lsu.edu

Maine

University of Southern Maine
Center for the Study of Lives
400 Bailey Hall
Gorham, ME 04038
Phone: 207-780-5078
Contact: Robert Atkinson
Teaching the telling of sacred stories.

Maryland

Garrett Community College
166 Lodge Circle
Swanton, MD 21561
Phone: 301-387-9199
Contact: Gail N. Herman
Offers courses on using storytelling in education and business.

Western Maryland College
School Library Media Program
Hill Hall
Westminster, MD 21157
Contact: Joanne Hay, jhay@cvn.net
http://www2.yk.psu.edu/~mer7/storytel.html
Course: Art of Storytelling.

Massachusetts

Fitchburg State College
160 Pearl Street
Fitchburg, MA 01420
Contact: Laurie DeRosa, Chair of Education, Lderosa@fsc.edu
www.fsc.edu
Courses are offered through the Department of Education (Early Childhood), the Department of English, and the Center for Professional Studies.

Harvard University
Folklore and Mythology Program
11 Prescott Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
Phone: 617-495-4788
Contact: folkmyth@fas.harvard.edu
http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~folkmyth/

Lesley University
29 Everett Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
Phone: 617-349-8740; 800-999-1959 ext. 8426
Contact: Lisa Donovan
http://www.lesley.edu/offcampus/term/nmagss_cal.html
The Creative Arts in Learning program offers storytelling specialization as part of master's of arts and master's of education degrees.

Simmons College
Graduate School of Library and Information Science
Room P-204D
300 The Fenway
Boston, MA 02115
Phone: 617-521-2793
Contact: Maggie Bush,
Margaret.bush@simmons.edu
Course: LIS 423: Storytelling.

Michigan

Grand Valley State University
Lake Superior Hall 121
Allendale, MI 49401
Phone: 616-331-3510
Contact: Karen Libman, libmank@gvsu.edu
Course: CTH 300: Storytelling.

Wayne State University
Teacher Education Division
241 Education Building
Detroit, MI 48202
Phone: 313-577-0928

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Contact: R. Craig Roney, rroney@wayne.edu
Graduate course in storytelling are cross-listed with the School of Information and Library Science; this university also offers related special topics courses.

Minnesota

Metropolitan State University
Communication, Writing, and the Arts Department
Suite 205, Energy Park Place
1380 Energy Lane
St. Paul, MN 55108
Contacts: Loren Niemi, niemistory@aol.com, Loren.Niemi@metrostate.edu, 651-793-1439; Nancy Donoval, 651-999-5940
http://www.metrostate.edu/cas/cwa/index.html
Courses: Storytelling as a Modern Communications Art, and Storytelling as Presentation & Performance (both analytic and performance skills).

University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
205 Folwell Hall
Minneapolis, MN
Phone: 612-624-1041
Contact: Jack Zipes, Zipes001@umn.edu
Course offered in the summer: Storytelling, Critical Literacy, and Creative Drama.

Missouri

University of Missouri—Columbia.
Center for Studies in Oral Tradition
66 McReynolds Hall
Columbia, MO 65211-2370
Phone: 573-882-9720
Contact: John Miles Foley, Director, csot@missouri.edu
http://oraltradition.org/

Nebraska

University of Nebraska, Omaha
Teacher Education
Kayser Hall 314
6001 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68182
Phone: 402-558-0864
Contact: Rita Paskowitz, storywitz@juno.com
Course: Storytelling and Education.

New Jersey

Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey
School of Communication, Information, and Library Studies
4 Huntington Street
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1071
Phone: 732-932-7500
Contact: lis@scils.rutgers.edu
http://www.scils.rutgers.edu
Course: Traditions in Oral Narration.

New Mexico

New Mexico State University
Department of Management
Las Cruces, NM 88003-8003
Contact: David Boje, dboje@nmsu.edu
http://business.nmsu.edu/~dboje/
Courses on business and storytelling.

New York

Bank Street Graduate School of Education
Main Campus Location
610 West 112th Street
New York, NY 10025-1898
Phone: 212-875-4492
Contact: Nina Jaffe, njaffe@bankstreet.edu
http://www.bankstreet.edu/gs/
Graduate courses: Storytelling for Children, Folklore in the Classroom, and Human Development I: Programming for Young Audiences.

Ithaca College
Department of Speech Communication
422 Muller Center
Ithaca, NY 14850
Phone: 607-274-3931
Contact: Bruce Henderson, henderso@ithaca.edu

Palmer School of Library and Information Science
720 Northern Boulevard

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Brookville, NY 11548-1300
Phone: 516-299-2866
Contact: Amy Spaulding,
amy.spaulding@liu.edu
Courses include Storytelling and Folk Literature, and Myth and the Age of Information (the roles of story and storytelling in the modern world).

New York University
Department of Performance Studies
721 Broadway, 6th Floor
New York, NY 10003
Phone: 212-998-1620
Contact: Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett,
bkg@nyu.edu
http://performance.tisch.nyu.edu/page/home.html

Yeshiva University, Stern College for Women
525 West End Avenue
New York, NY 10024
Phone: 917-326-4810
Contact: Peninnah Schram,
Peninnah1@aol.com

North Carolina

The University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill
School of Library and Information Science
CB#3360 Manning Hall
Chapel Hill, NC 27599
Phone: 919-962-7622
Contact: Brian Sturm, sturm@ils.unc.edu
http://ils.unc.edu/~sturm/
Course: INLS 121: Principles and Techniques of Storytelling.

The University of North Carolina, Greensboro
University Speaking Center
3211 MHRA Building
Greensboro, NC 27403
Contact: Kim Cuny, kmcuny@uncg.edu
Course: Storytelling Across Cultures (Freshman Seminars).

Ohio

Ashland University
Communication Arts
Ashland, OH 44805
Phone: 419-289-5143
Contact: Deleasa Randall-Griffiths,
DRANDALL@ashland.edu
Course in International Storytelling is offered in Communications and Education.

The Ohio State University
Enarson Hall
154 West 12th Avenue
Columbus, OH 43210
www.osu.edu
Storytelling courses are offered through Freshman Seminars and through Folklore and Area Studies (i.e., Near Eastern Language & Culture).

Pennsylvania

Allegheny College
Psychology
520 N. Main Street
Meadville, PA 16335
Contact: Joshua Searle-White,
jsearle@allegheny.edu
Course: FS 101: Adventures, Mysteries, and Just Plain Lies: The Art of Telling Stories.

Kutztown University
Performance Studies/Speech and Theatre
Speech Communication
15200 Kutztown Road
Kutztown, PA 19530
Phone: 610-683-4251
Contact: Deryl Johnson,
Johnson@kutztown.edu

University of Pittsburgh
School of Information Sciences
135 North Bellefield
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
Phone: 412-624-3988
http://www.ischool.pitt.edu/
Course: LIS 2326: Storytelling.

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Tennessee

East Tennessee State University
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
P.O. Box 70784
Johnson City, TN 37614-1709
Phone: 423-439-7863
Contact: Joseph Sobol, Director of Storytelling Program, sobol@etsu.edu
http://www.etsu.edu/stories
Offers a master's of arts in Reading with a Concentration in Storytelling. Courses include: Advanced Storytelling, Basic Storytelling, Historical and Psychological Foundations of Storytelling, Linguistics of Reading (section focusing on storytelling), and Practicum. Electives include Storytelling Institutes, Story Performance, and special topics courses. Capstone Project and thesis options are available.

University of Tennessee, Knoxville
School of Information Science
451 Comm UEB
Knoxville, TN 37996
Contact: Tena Litherland, clither1@utk.edu
Course: IS 576: Storytelling in the Library and Classroom.

Texas

University of North Texas
School of Library and Information Sciences
Information Sciences Building, Room 216
P.O. Box 311068
Denton, TX 76203-1068
Phone: 940-565-2187
Contact: Elizabeth Figa, efiga@lis.admin.unt.edu, slis@unt.edu
http://www.unt.edu/slis; http://www.courses.unt.edu/efiga/Figa/
Graduate Academic Certificate in Storytelling: http://www.unt.edu/slis/programs/storytellingcert.htm
Courses: SLIS 5440, Storytelling, and SLIS 5611, Advanced Storytelling. The first course is offered each semester, 100 percent online; the second course also is taught online, but has an optional on-site component and is offered just once a year.

Vermont

Goddard College
123 Pitkin Road
Plainfield, VT 05667
Phone: 785-843-0253
Contact: Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg, Coordinator, carynken@mindspring.com
http://www.goddard.edu/masterarts_transformative
Offers master's of arts in Individualized Studies, concentration in Transformative Language Arts.

Virginia

George Mason University
Department of English
Robinson A439
4400 University Drive, MSN 3E4
Fairfax, VA 22030
Phone: 703-993-1172
Contact: Margaret R. Yocom, myocom@gmu.edu

Washington

Shoreline Community College
Humanities Division, Speech Communication
16101 Greenwood Avenue North
Shoreline, WA 98133-5696
Phone: 206-546-4795
Contact: Brooke Zimmers, bzimmers@shoreline.edu
Course: Speech Communications: The Art of Storytelling.

Western Washington University
Woodring College of Education
Miller Hall 265
Bellingham, WA 98225
Phone: 360-650-6446
Contact: Rosemary Scott Vohs, Rosemary.Vohs@wwu.edu
www.wwu.edu/~rvohs
Courses offered include Advanced Storytelling, The Power of Storytelling in Action, Reader's Theatre in the Classroom, and Storytelling:

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Practical Field Applications, as well as summer workshops and independent studies.

Wisconsin

University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
Theatre 278
P.O. Box 413
Milwaukee, WI 53201
Phone: 414-229-6066
Contact: Robin Mello, rmello@uwm.edu
Offers storytelling courses in the Theatre department (460) and School of Information Studies.

University of Wisconsin, Madison
American Indian Studies Program
315 Ingraham Hall
1155 Observatory Drive
Madison, WI 53706
Phone: 608-263-5501
Contact: aisp@mailplus.wisc.edu
Courses in American Indian Oral Literature.

Storytelling Festivals

Following is a list of storytelling festivals. The international festivals are listed first, followed by those held in the United States. The location, contact information, website, and month or season are listed for each festival as applicable. All events are annual unless otherwise noted.

Those wishing to attend any of the festivals listed here should be aware that storytelling festivals may be cancelled, rescheduled, or have their organizers or sites changed. While the events included represent many major events, this is not to be considered a comprehensive list, since storytelling events may be held in other areas, and new storytelling festivals may be started up after this list is published.

Australia

Australian National Storytelling Conference/Festival. Perth. 61-0-35333-4347. astewart@netconnect.com.au.

Canada

Alberta

T.A.L.E.S. Fort Edmonton Storytelling Festival. Edmonton. holly.gilmour@interbaun.com; mamclean@shaw.ca. www.ecn.ab.ca/~tales/. September.

British Columbia

Kootenay Storytelling Festival. Proctor. 888-422-1123. www.kootenaystory.org. July.

Vancouver Storytelling Festival. Vancouver. 604-876-2272. info@vancouverstorytelling.org. www.vancouverstorytelling.org. Time varies.

Manitoba

Sundog Storytelling Festival. Winnipeg. 204-956-2830. February.

Newfoundland

St. John's Storytelling Festival. St. John's. 866-576-8508. office@sjfac.nf.net. www.nlfolk.com/storytelling/storytelling.html. November.

Ontario

Brantford Storytelling Festival. Brantford. 519-756-0727. taletellers@bizbrant.com. www.tales.bizbrant.com. October.

Ottawa Storytelling Festival. Ottawa. 613-722-2606. ruth@rasputins.ca. Autumn.

The Toronto Festival of Storytelling. Toronto. 416-656-2445. admin@storytellingtoronto.org. March/April.

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Quebec

Note: The Quebec festivals, though bilingual, are mostly for French speakers.

De Bouche à Oreille (From the Mouth to the Ear). Montreal. info@andrelemelin.com. Time varies.

Festival du Conte (Storytelling Festival). West Brome. Time varies.

Le Festival Intercultural du Conte du Quebec (The International Storytelling Festival of Quebec), Montreal. 514-272-4494. rosebudc@sympatico.ca. http://festival-conte.qc.ca/. Bi-annually in October.

Yukon Territory

Yukon International Storytelling Festival. Whitehorse. yukonstory@yknet.yk.ca. Time varies.

Ireland

Féile Scéalaíochta Chléire/The Cape Clear Island International Storytelling Festival. Cape Clear Island, Skibbereen, County Cork. http://indigo.ie/~stories/. September.

New Zealand

Glistening Waters Storytelling Festival. Masterton. gw@waireap.org.nz. Time varies.

United Kingdom

Festival at the Edge. Much Wenlock, Shropshire. www.festivalattheedge.com. July.

North Pennines Storytelling Festival. Teesdale, Tynedale, Wear Valley, Eden. www.npenninestorytelling.org.uk/. October.

United States

Arizona

Mesa Storytelling Festival. Mesa. 480-644-6500. www.mesaartscenter.com. October.

California

Ananda Storytelling Festival. Nevada City. www.livingwisdom.org. Autumn.

Bay Area Storytelling Festival. San Francisco. www.bayareastorytelling.org/. May.

Mariposa Storytelling Festival. Mariposa. www.arts-mariposa.org/storytelling.html. March.

Colorado

Rocky Mountain Storytelling Festival. Palmer Lake. www.colo-performingartists.com/Festival/homepage.html. Mid-summer.

Connecticut

Connecticut Storytelling Festival. New London. www.connstorycenter.org/festival.html. Late April or early May.

Florida

Cracker Storytelling Festival. Homeland Heritage Park. 863-834-4274. October.

Tampa Hillsborough County Storytelling Festival. www.tampastory.org/. April.

Georgia

Azalea Storytelling Festival. La Grange College, La Grange. www.lagrange.edu/azalea/index.html. March.

Winter Storytelling Festival. Southern Order of Storytellers. Atlanta. www.southernorderofstorytellers.org/. January.

Illinois

Annual Sterling Storytelling Festival. Sterling. 815-625-1370. akpeach54@hotmail.com. August/September.

Fox Valley Folk Music & Storytelling Festival. Geneva. 630-897-3655. September.

Illinois Storytelling Festival. Spring Grove. 630-877-0931. info@storytelling.org. August.

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Indiana

Hoosier Storytelling Festival. Indianapolis. 317-576-9848. Ellen@storytellingarts.org. October.

Iowa

Iowa Storytelling Festival. Clear Lake. 641-357-6134. clplib@netins.net. July.

Kansas

Kansas Storytelling Festival. Downs. http://www.downsks.net/. April.

Kentucky

Cave Run Storytelling Festival. Morehead. 606-780-4342; 800-654-1944. caverunstoryfest.org/. September.

Corn Island Storytelling Festival. Louisville. 502-245-0643. www.cornislandstorytellingfestival.org/. September.

Massachusetts

Three Apples Storytelling Festival. Bedford. 617-499-9529. www.threeapples.org. September or October.

Michigan

Detroit Storytelling Festival. Livonia. http://www.detroitstorytelling.org/. September.

Michigan Storytellers Festival. Flint. 810-232-7111. www.flint.lib.mi.us/msf. July.

Mississippi

Mississippi Blueberry Jubilee Storytelling Festival. Poplarville Storytelling Guild. Poplarville. www.blueberryjubilee.org. June.

Missouri

St. Louis Storytelling Festival. St. Louis. 314-516-5961. www.umsl.edu/divisions/conted/storyfes/. April/May.

Montana

Montana Story Telling Roundup. Cut Bank. 406-336-3253; 406-873-2295. www.northerntel.net/~cbchambe/storytel/. April.

Nebraska

Buffalo Commons Storytelling Festival. McCook. http://www.buffalocommons.org/. May.

New Mexico

Taos Storytelling Festival. Taos. 877-758-7343; 575-758-0081. www.somostaos.org. October.

New York

Riverway Storytelling Festival. Albany. 518-383-4620. www.riverwaystorytellingfestival.org. April/May.

Oregon

Stories by the Sea. Newport. 541-265-ARTS. September.

Tapestry of Tales Storytelling Festival. Portland. 503-988-5402. November.

Pennsylvania

Three Rivers Storytelling Festival. Pittsburgh. smith6@einetwork.net. August.

South Carolina

Patchwork Tales Storytelling Festival. York County Public Library, Rock Hill. www.patchworktales.org. March.

Tennessee

Haunting in the Hills, a Storytelling Event. Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, Big South Fork. 423-569-9778. September.

National Storytelling Festival. International Storytelling Foundation, Jonesborough. www.storytellingfoundation.net/festival/festival.htm. October.

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Texas

George West Storyfest. George West. http://georgeweststoryfest.org/. November.

Squatty Pines Storytelling Retreat. Whitehouse. 903-510-6400. http://www.easttexastellers.homestead.com/Squatty.html. March.

Utah

Timpanogos Storytelling Festival. Orem. 801-229-7050. www.timpfest.org. August/September.

Washington

Bellingham Storytelling Festival. Bellingham. 360-714-9631. November.

Forest Storytelling Festival. Port Angeles. 360-417-5031; 206-935-5308. forestfest@yahoo.com. October.

Wisconsin

Northlands Annual Conference and Storytelling Workshop. Location varies. www.northlands.net. April.

Riverbend Storytelling Festival. West Bend. info@riverbendstorytelling.org. October.

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Bibliography

Storytelling Books

Baker, Augusta, and Ellin Greene. *Storytelling: Art and Technique*. New York: R.R. Bowker, 1977.

Barton, Bob. *Tell Me Another: Storytelling and Reading Aloud at Home, at School, and in the Community*. Portsmouth, NH: Heineman. 1986.

Barton, Bob, and David Booth. *Stories in the Classroom: Storytelling, Reading Aloud and Roleplaying with Children*. Portsmouth, NH: Heineman. 1990.

Bauer, Caroline Feller. *Caroline Feller Bauer's New Handbook for Storytellers*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1993.

———. *Handbook for Storytellers*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1977.

Breneman, Lucille N., and Bren Breneman. *Once Upon a Time: A Storytelling Handbook*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1983.

Bruchac, Joseph. *Tell Me a Tale: A Book About Storytelling*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1997.

Cassady, Marsh. *The Art of Storytelling: Creative Ideas for Preparation and Performance*. San Francisco: Meriwether, 1994.

———. *Storytelling Step by Step*. San Jose, CA: Resource, 1990.

Collins, Chase. *Tell Me a Story: Creating Bedtime Tales Your Children Will Dream On*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992.

Cullum, Carolyn N. *The Storytime Sourcebook: A Compendium of Ideas and Resources for Storytellers*. New York: Neal-Schuman, 1990.

Dart, Archa O. *Tips for Storytellers*. Nashville, TN: Southern Publishers Association, 1966.

Davis, Donald. *Telling Your Own Stories*. Little Rock, AR: August House, 1994.

Geisler, Harlynne. *Storytelling Professionally: The Nuts and Bolts of a Working Performer*. Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1997.

Gillard, Marni. *Storyteller, Storyteacher: Discovering the Power of Storytelling for Teaching and Living*. York, ME: Stenhouse, 1996.

Greene, Ellin. *Storytelling: Art and Technique*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1996.

Haven, Kendall. *Super Simple Storytelling: A Can-Do Guide for Every Classroom, Every Day*. Englewood, CO: Teacher Ideas, 2000.

Kinghorn, Harriet R., and Mary Helen Pelton. *Every Child a Storyteller: A Handbook of Ideas*. Englewood, CO: Teacher Ideas, 1991.

Lipman, Doug. *Improving Your Storytelling: Beyond the Basics for All Who Tell Stories in Work or Play*. Little Rock, AR: August House, 1999.

———. *The Storytelling Coach: How to Listen, Praise, and Bring Out People's Best*. Little Rock, AR: August House, 1995.

———. *Storytelling Games: Creative Activities for Language, Communication, and Composition Across the Curriculum*. Westport, CT: Oryx, 1994.

Livo, Norma, and Sandra Reitz. *Storytelling: Process and Practice*. Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1986.

MacDonald, Margaret Read. *The Storyteller's Start-Up Book: Finding, Learning, Performing, and Using Folktales: Including Twelve Tellable Tales*. Little Rock, AR: August House, 1993.

Mellon, Nancy. *Storytelling and the Art of Imagination*. Rockport, MA: Element, 1992.

Mooney, Bill, and David Holt. *The Storyteller's Guide: Storytellers Share Advice for the Classroom, Boardroom, Showroom, Podium, Pulpit and Central Stage*. Little Rock, AR: August House, 1996.

Moore, Robin. *Creating a Family Storytelling Tradition: Awakening the Hidden Storyteller*. Little Rock, AR: August House, 1999.

National Storytelling Association. *Tales as Tools: The Power of Story in the Classroom*. Jonesborough, TN: National Storytelling, 1994.

Pellowski, Anne. *The Family Storytelling Handbook: How to Use Stories, Anecdotes, Rhymes, Handkerchiefs, Paper,*

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and Other Objects to Enrich Your Family Traditions. New York and London: Collier Macmillan, 1987.
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Shedlock, Marie. *The Art of the Storyteller*. New York: Dover. 1951.
Simmons, Annette. *The Story Factor: Inspiration, Influence, and Persuasion Through the Art of Storytelling*. Boulder, CO: Perseus, 2002.
Winch, Gordon, and Barbara Poston-Anderson. *Now for a Story: Sharing Stories with Young Children*. Alberta Park, Australia: Phoenix Education, 1993.
Zipes, Jack. *Creative Storytelling: Building Community, Changing Lives*. New York: Routledge. 1995.

Folktale Books

Afanas'ev, Aleksandr. *Russian Fairy Tales*. New York: Pantheon, 1976.
Ausubel, Nathan. *A Treasury of Jewish Folklore*. New York: Crown, 1975.
Barchers, Suzanne I. *Wise Women*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1990.
Bierhorst, John. *Latin American Folktales*. New York: Pantheon, 2001.
Briggs, Katharine M. *A Dictionary of British Folk-Tales in the English Language*. 2 vols. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970.
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