**A World of Myths**

*How did past civilizations explain natural phenomena?*

**Grades 6-8 Lesson**: A World of Myths
**Grade Band**: 6-8
**Arts Subject**: Visual Arts
**Other Subject**: English & Literature, World Cultures

## SUMMARY

In this 6-8 lesson, students will explore how myths help to explain nature and science. Students will read, discuss, and draw comparisons between creation myths and explanatory myths. They will then create a drawing or illustration to represent one of those myths.

## PREPARATION

### Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Infer the theme of a story.
- Draw comparisons between creation myths and explanatory myths.
- Define special vocabulary and concepts related to myths.
- Read and interpret myths from various cultures.
- Respond to literature through writing and discussion.
- Read for a variety of orientations and purposes, including reading for literary experience and reading to be informed.
- Write for various audiences with the purpose of informing and expressing personal ideas
- Create an original painting or drawing.
- Present art to an audience.

### Standards Alignment

#### National Core Arts Standards

VA:Cr1.1.6a Combine concepts collaboratively to generate innovative ideas for creating art.
VA:Cr1.1.7a Apply methods to overcome creative blocks.
VA:Cr1.1.8a Document early stages of the creative process visually and/or verbally in traditional or new media.
VA:Cr2.1.6a Demonstrate openness in trying new ideas, materials, methods, and approaches in making works of art and design.
VA:Cr2.1.7a Demonstrate persistence in developing skills with various materials, methods, and approaches in creating works of art or design.
VA:Cr2.1.8a Demonstrate willingness to experiment, innovate, and take risks to pursue ideas, forms, and meanings that emerge in the process of artmaking or designing.

#### Common Core State Standards


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ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3 Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.
ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.
ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3 Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).
ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.
ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.3 Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

**Recommended Student Materials**
**Editable Documents**: *Before sharing these resources with students, you must first save them to your Google account by opening them, and selecting "Make a copy" from the File menu. Check out Sharing Tips or Instructional Benefits when implementing Google Docs and Google Slides with students.*

- Vocabulary: A World of Myths
- "Why Rabbit Has a Short Tail"
- "How Elephant Got Its Trunk"
- "Pele"
- "Hephaestus"
- Comparing Creation Myths
- "The Daughter of the Star"
- "Pandora's Box"
- Comparing Explanatory Myths
- Myth Illustration Planner

**Additional Materials**

- Drawing or canvas paper
- Paint
- Paintbrushes
- Pens, pencils, or other drawing supplies

**Teacher Background**
Teachers should review the myths prior to sharing them with students. Teachers should be familiar with myths such as how almost every civilization in the world has its own mythology. Civilizations used myths to explain the inexplicable phenomena they experienced (e.g.:


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droughts, hurricanes, severe weather) or to explain creation and how man and earth came to be.

**Student Prerequisites**
Students should have some familiarity with mythology in general and the role it played in past civilizations.

**Accessibility Notes**
Modify handouts, text, and utilize assistive technologies as needed. Allow extra time for task completion.

**INSTRUCTION**
**Engage**
**1. Introduce students to the terms, *myth, Pourquoi, Pourquoi tale, renditions/versions, and origin*, from the resource Vocabulary: A World of Myths.** Display the vocabulary and discuss the definitions with students.

**2. Explain to students that myths are stories that people told long ago in an attempt to answer serious questions about how important things began and occurred.** Ask students to share myths they are familiar with.

**3. Have students read *Pourquoi* tales such as "Why Rabbit Has a Short Tail" or "How Elephant Got Its Trunk."** Ask students to read the tales, then lead a brief discussion about the content of these tales. Ask students: *What is the theme of the story? How do the stories explain certain elements and processes that occur in life and the universe?*

**Build**
**1. Distribute copies of "Pele."** Have students read the myth to find out what question is being answered. Explain to students the story of Pele, which exists in many forms throughout the South and North Pacific, where volcanoes are common and represent a destructive force, as well as a constructive one. (Volcanoes help to build up fertile land.) In some renditions of the myth, Pele has many sisters who try to carry out her wishes. In other renditions, Hi'aka is the main heroine and Pele is a secondary one. On the islands of Hawai'i, the myth of Pele not only accounts for the origin of volcanoes, but also for the origin of the hula, in which the many and varying episodes of the full story are told in dance, song, and gesture.

**2. Distribute copies of "Hephaestus."** Have students read this myth to find out how the Greeks sought to answer the question of how volcanoes were created. When the reading is completed, discuss the answers the Greeks told in this story.

**3. Have students compare and contrast the two creation myths using the Comparing Creation Myths resource.** Ask students: *How it is possible that different cultures interpret the*


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*same natural phenomenon differently?* Explain to students that cultures can develop a different group of myths to explain the world around them.

**Apply**

**1. Recall with students some of the types of myths the ancient cultures told: specifically, creation myths and explanatory myths.** For example, "The Origin of the Volcano" and "Zeus" are creation myths. Tell them the two myths they are about to read are explanatory myths. As they read them, have the students think about why they are called explanatory myths.

**2. Distribute the myths, "The Daughter of the Star" and "Pandora's Box."** Have students read and discuss the reasons these myths were told. Explain that myths have practical functions within a culture. One of these is to instill in people a respect for how order was established in their culture, as well as to reinforce rules and shared beliefs that maintain order.

**3. Working in small groups, have the students compare and contrast these two explanatory myths using the Comparing Explanatory Myths resource.** Discuss the explanatory comparisons when students. Ask students: *What is the difference between a creation myth and an explanatory myth?*

**Reflect**

**1. Distribute the Myth Illustration Planner.** Have the students work in groups on a collaborative painting or drawing that depicts one of the myths read in class. Tell them they are going to pretend they are storytellers in an ancient village telling this myth to others.

**2. Distribute drawing materials to each group.** Allow time for students to illustrate the myth of their choice. Confer with students to give feedback and provide drawing technique support. After the groups have completed their illustrations, have them present their work to the rest of the class.

**3. Assess students' knowledge of myths with a presentation.** Create a classroom gallery to display the art of each student. Have half the class stand in front of their art and the other half of the class visit the art and artist as a gallery spectator. Students will move through the gallery to analyze the paintings and asking the artists questions about the relationship between the art and the myth they chose. Once students have a chance to view the art, they will switch roles.

**Credits**

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