

UNIT

6

Timeless Tales



MYTHS, LEGENDS,
AND TALES

Why do we tell **STORIES?**

Think of a movie that taught you about a historical event, a television program that inspired you in some way, or a novel that kept you laughing from the first page to the last. **Stories** are told for many reasons—some simply entertain us, while others teach us a lesson. Many stories are told year after year to pass on cultural values and traditions from one generation to the next.

ACTIVITY Recall an experience you've had or a story you've heard that you'd like to share with others. Now get together with a small group. As you take turns telling stories, consider these questions:

- Why do you think each person decided to tell the story he or she did?
- Which story do you think you will remember and retell? Why?



ILLINOIS
OBJECTIVES

Preview Unit Goals

**LITERARY
ANALYSIS**

- Identify and analyze characteristics of myths, legends, tall tales, and folk tales
- Identify cultural values in traditional literature
- Identify and analyze universal themes

READING

- Develop strategies for reading, including visualizing and predicting
- Identify cause-effect relationships
- Summarize plot
- Identify main ideas and supporting details; create an outline

**WRITING AND
GRAMMAR**

- Write a problem-solution essay
- Write a compare-contrast essay
- Use capitalization correctly
- Combine clauses to form compound and complex sentences

**SPEAKING,
LISTENING,
AND VIEWING**

- Create a class newspaper

VOCABULARY

- Use context clues, base words, and affixes to figure out the meanings of words
- Use a dictionary, thesaurus, or synonym finder to find synonyms for words
- Identify and use connotative meanings of words

**ACADEMIC
VOCABULARY**

- | | | |
|----------|-------------|--------------------|
| • myth | • folk tale | • cultural values |
| • legend | • tall tale | • universal themes |

Myths, Legends, and Tales

A young girl lives happily ever after, thanks to a fairy godmother and a glass slipper. A lion learns the value of a small friend. A knight defeats a hideous monster. Many stories that are still popular today, such as Aesop's fables and medieval legends, were first told hundreds, even thousands of years ago. Handed down by word of mouth and later recorded in writing, these stories do more than entertain. They help us to understand and appreciate other times and cultures.


**ILLINOIS
OBJECTIVES**
READING STANDARDS

2.6.04 Identify message or theme

2.6.14 Identify subcategories of genres

Part 1: What Stories Live On?

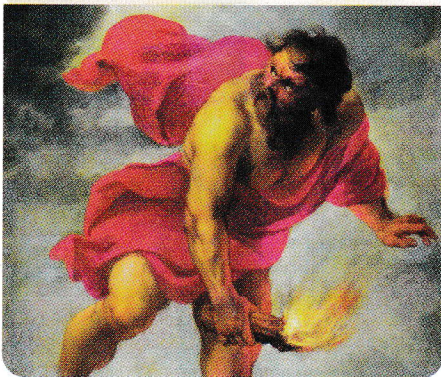
In this unit, you will read many traditional stories that have stood the test of time, such as myths and several kinds of folk tales. Before you can learn from these stories, you need to know what to expect from them. Examine this graphic to discover the characteristics of myths, legends, and tall tales.

TRADITIONAL STORIES

MYTH

Story that was created to explain mysteries of the universe

- Often explains how something connected with humans or nature came to be
- Usually features gods, goddesses, and other beings with supernatural powers as well as human flaws


LEGEND

Story handed down from the past that is believed to be based on real people and events

- Tells about a hero or heroine with special powers and admirable qualities
- Describes the hero's or heroine's struggle against a powerful force


TALL TALE

Humorous story about events and characters that are exaggerated

- Often features a character who is "larger than life"—stronger, louder, or more extraordinary than a regular person
- Includes details that make events and the character's qualities seem unbelievable



MODEL 1: MYTH

This myth comes from the Creek, a Native American tribe from the southern United States. What mysteries of the natural world does the myth explain?

How Day and Night Came

Creek myth retold by Virginia Pounds Brown and Laurella Owens

The question was: how shall day and night be divided? Some wanted it always to be daytime; others wanted it always to be night.

After much talk, the chipmunk said: "I see that the raccoon has rings on his tail divided equally, first a dark color and then a light color. I think day and night should be divided like the rings on the raccoon's tail."

The animals were surprised at the wisdom of the chipmunk. They adopted his plan and divided day and night like the rings on the raccoon's tail, one succeeding the other in regular order.

The bear was so envious of the chipmunk's wisdom and of the attention given that small creature, that he attacked him. He scratched the chipmunk's back so deeply that even today chipmunks have stripes on their backs.

Close Read

1. Describe the plan the chipmunk devises to divide day and night.
2. In addition to the origin of day and night, what other mystery of the natural world does this myth explain?

MODEL 2: TALL TALE

Now read this excerpt from a tall tale about a character named Sal Fink.

from

SAL FINK

Hi-i-i-i-i-ow-ow-ow-who-whooh!

Tall tale retold by Robert D. San Souci

. . . Mississippi River boatman Mike Fink had one daughter, Sal, who was a "ring-tailed roarer" in her own right. In fact, she became known far and wide as the "Mississippi Screamer," because of the way she would bellow "Hi-i-i-i-i-ow-ow-ow-who-whooh!" when she was feeling high-spirited or ready for a fight. Up and down the river she was known for fighting a duel with a thunderbolt, riding the river on the back of an alligator while "standen upright an' dancing 'Yankee Doodle,'" and even outracing a steamboat poling her own keelboat with a hand-picked crew.

Close Read

1. What qualities make Sal Fink "larger than life"?
2. The boxed detail describes one unbelievable feat that Sal has accomplished. What else has Sal done that seems unbelievable or exaggerated?

Part 2: What Can Stories Teach Us?

The Creek myth you just read does more than explain two mysteries of the natural world. It also teaches readers about the qualities that mattered most to the Creek. One such quality is wisdom. Did you notice that all the animals, except for the jealous bear, respected the chipmunk? Read between the lines of most traditional stories, and you can draw conclusions about the **cultural values**—ideas and beliefs—that were honored by that culture.

Consider this Vietnamese folk tale about two brothers named Kim and De. Kim is a hard-working man who is embarrassed by De's laziness. Notice how asking yourself a few questions can help you make inferences about Vietnamese cultural values.

from *The Beggar
in the Blanket*

Vietnamese folk tale retold by **Gail B. Graham**

... Kim's wife was a gentle and thoughtful woman, and she felt sorry for De.

"It's been more than a month since we've seen your brother," she said to Kim one night. "Why don't you ask him to come and have dinner
5 with us?"

Kim was surprised. "What would Nguyen and Ton and Cao and Duc and all my other friends think if they came in and found that good-for-nothing brother of mine sitting at our table?" he asked. "They would be insulted! They would never come to my house again!"

10 "So much the worse for them," replied his wife. "Friends are not the same as a brother."

"And it's a good thing they're not!" Kim retorted. "The whole village would starve if all my friends were as lazy as De."

15 Kim's wife could see that it was no use arguing with her stubborn husband. Nevertheless she vowed that she would make Kim understand the value of a brother, even a poor and lazy brother like De.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Which characters have admirable qualities, and which have flaws?

Kim's "thoughtful" wife is described positively. However, her husband is "stubborn"; De is "lazy."

What lessons do the characters learn?

Kim's wife vows to teach her husband a lesson about the importance of family.

What can you infer about this culture's values?

The people who told this tale valued family over everything else. They also believed in working hard.

MODEL 1: CULTURAL VALUES IN A MYTH

In this ancient Greek myth, two gods disguise themselves as humans and travel from door to door in search of food and shelter. Baucis and Philemon, a poor couple, welcome the strangers into their home. Find out what happens when the gods reveal their identity to their hosts.

from **BAUCIS AND PHILEMON**

Greek myth retold by **Olivia E. Coolidge**

“Philemon, you have welcomed us beneath your roof this day when richer men refused us shelter. Be sure those shall be punished who would not help the wandering stranger, but you shall have whatever reward you choose. Tell us what you will have.”

- 5 The old man thought for a little with his eyes bent on the ground, and then he said: “We have lived together here for many years, happy even though the times have been hard. But never yet did we see fit to turn a stranger from our gate or to seek reward for entertaining him. To have spoken with the immortals face to face is a thing few men can boast of. . . .”
- 10

Close Read

1. Consider how the gods respond to Philemon's actions. What can you infer about the kinds of behavior that were rewarded in ancient Greek culture?
2. Reread the boxed text. What does it tell you about how the Greeks felt about their gods?

MODEL 2: CULTURAL VALUES IN A LEGEND

Many movies and novels tell about the daring deeds of Robin Hood, a hero of medieval legend. Though he was an outlaw, Robin Hood was celebrated by many because he fought to help the helpless.

from **Robin Hood of Sherwood Forest**

Legend retold by **Ann McGovern**

Life in those olden days was oftentimes cruel and unjust for the good yeomen and poor folk who were made to pay large sums of money to the nobles and the rich. High taxes, outrageous rents, and fines made the poor even poorer as they tried to scratch a life out of the fields and forests.

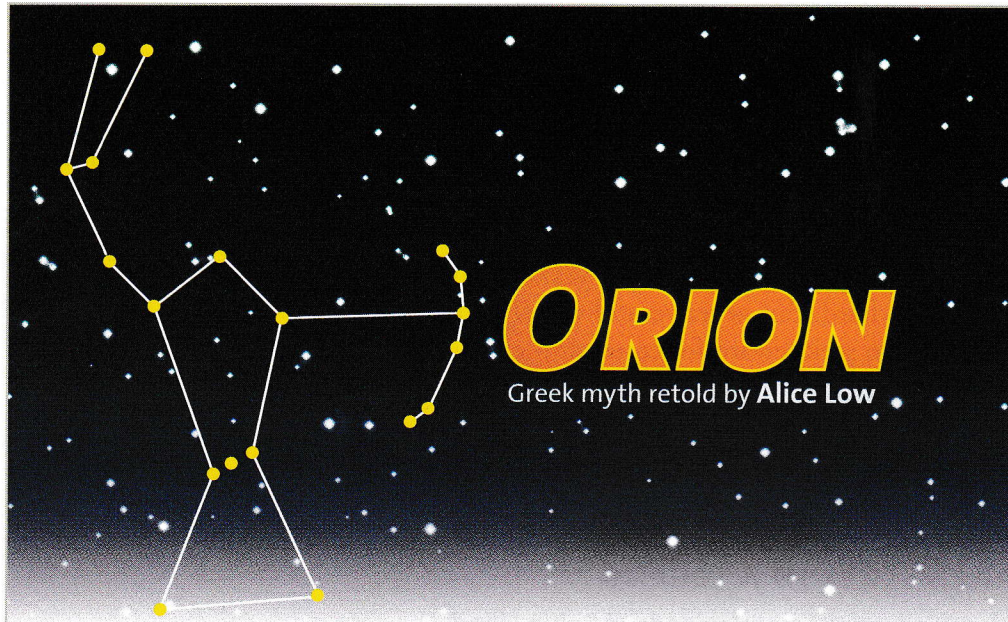
- 5 Indeed, the laws of the rich were such that whosoever stepped into the King's forest to kill a deer to keep their families from starving or cut wood to keep from freezing were guilty of crime and, if caught, could be hanged.
- 10 So it was that men, such as Robin Hood, Will Stutely, Midge the Miller's son, and others as honest as these, were called outlaws through no wish or fault of their own.

Close Read

1. Which details suggest that the people who first told this legend were fed up with the unfair laws of the rich?
2. Reread the boxed details, noting how the characters are described. What qualities do you think were valued in medieval times?

Part 3: Analyze the Literature

Ancient Greek myths are more than 3,000 years old, so why are we still drawn to them? With their mighty heroes, flawed gods and goddesses, and supernatural events, Greek myths still have the power to entertain. At the same time, they help us to understand the values and beliefs of the people who first told them. Use what you've learned in this workshop to analyze "Orion," one of several Greek myths that you will read in this unit.



Orion was a giant and a brave hunter. He could walk on water, a gift given him by his father, Poseidon, god of the sea.

One day Orion walked across the water to the island of Chios. There he fell in love with the king's daughter, Merope.

5 Orion said to the king, "I wish to marry your daughter, for I have fallen deeply in love with her. Tell me what I must do to gain her hand."

"Very well," said the king. "Since you are famous as a mighty hunter, you must rid my island of lions and bears and wolves. Only then will I give you my precious daughter's hand in marriage."

10 Orion strode through the hills and killed all the wild animals with his sword and his club. Then he brought their skins to the king and said, "Now I have finished my task. Let us set a day for the wedding."

But the king did not want to part with his daughter and kept putting off the wedding date. This angered Orion, and he tried to carry off
15 Merope.

Close Read

1. Reread the boxed details. What qualities and powers make Orion special?

Her father retaliated.¹ He called on the god of wine, Dionysus, to put Orion into a deep sleep. Then the king blinded Orion and flung him onto the sand by the sea.

When Orion awoke sightless, he cried out, "I am blind and helpless.
20 How shall I ever hunt again or win Merope for my bride?"

In his despair, Orion consulted an oracle,² which answered him, "O Orion, you shall regain your sight if you travel east to the place where the sun rises. The warm rays of the sun shall heal your eyes and restore their power."

25 But how could a blind man find his way to that distant place? Orion followed the sound of the Cyclopes³ hammers to the forge of the god Hephaestus.⁴ When the god saw the blind hunter, he took pity on him and gave him a guide to lead him to the sun, just as it was rising.

Orion raised his eyes to the sun and, miraculously, he could see again.
30 After thanking the sun, Orion set off for the island of Chios to take revenge on the king. But the king and his daughter had fled, possibly to Crete, and Orion went there to look for them. He never found them, but he met up with Artemis, goddess of the hunt, and spent days hunting with her. They were a happy pair, roving through the woods,
35 until Artemis's brother, Apollo, became jealous.

Apollo sent a scorpion to attack Orion. Orion could not pierce the scorpion's tough body with his arrows, but he dodged the poisonous insect and strode far out to sea.

Apollo was bent on destroying Orion, and he called to Artemis,
40 "See that rock way out there in the sea? I challenge you to hit it."

Artemis loved a challenge. She drew her bow and aimed carefully. Her first arrow hit the mark, and Apollo congratulated her on her skill.

But when the waves brought Orion's body to the shore, Artemis moaned with grief. "I have killed my beloved companion. I shall never
45 forget him. And the world shall never forget him, either."

She lifted his body up into the sky, where he remains among the stars to this day—the mighty hunter, one of the most brilliant constellations,⁵ with his sword and his club and three bright stars for his belt.

1. **retaliated:** got revenge.

2. **oracle:** in ancient Greece, a wise person who was said to be able to communicate with the gods and predict the future.

3. **Cyclopes:** one-eyed monsters.

4. **Hephaestus:** the god of fire, responsible for creating armor, sculptures, and other objects by shaping hot metal with a hammer.

5. **constellations:** groupings of stars in the sky.

Close Read

2. Whom does Orion turn to for help with his problem? Explain what his actions in lines 21–27 suggest about ancient Greek beliefs.
3. Review lines 16–18 and 25–28. In what ways do the gods play a role in Orion's life?
4. Reread lines 34–44. What human qualities or emotions do Apollo and Artemis display?
5. How does Apollo trick Artemis into "destroying Orion"?
6. What mystery of the universe does this myth explain?

The Story of Ceres and Proserpina

Classical Myth Retold by Mary Pope Osborne

How powerful is LOVE?



**ILLINOIS
OBJECTIVES**

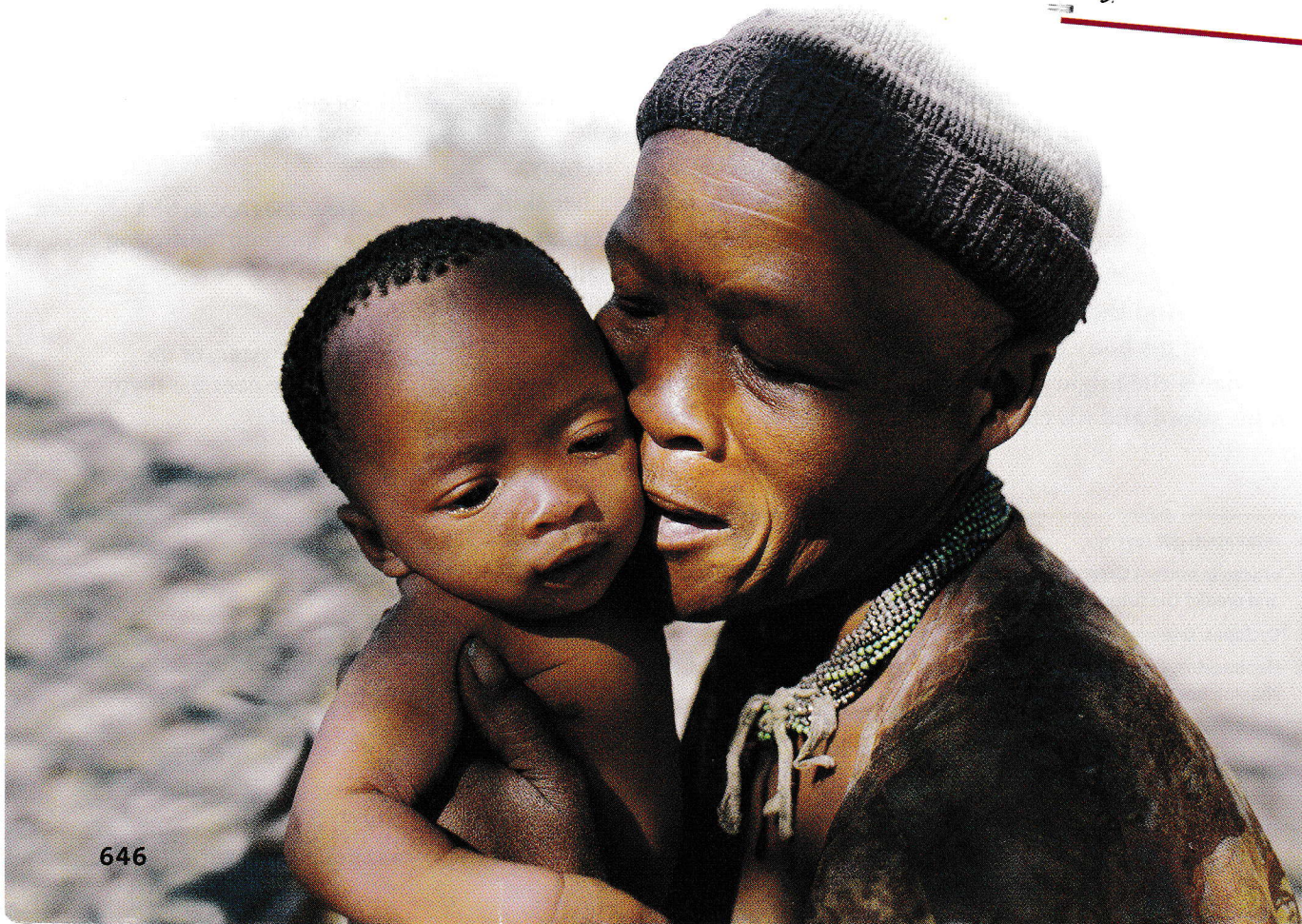
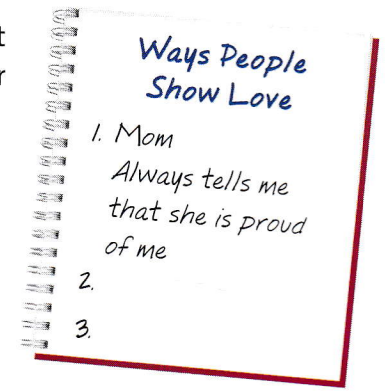
READING STANDARDS

1.6.13 Identify cause and effect organizational patterns

2.6.14 Identify subcategories of genres

KEY IDEA Love can be a powerful force in people's lives, shaping the decisions they make and the actions they take. In this myth, you'll read about a mother's deep affection for her daughter and how it affects the people and places around her.

LIST IT Make a list of three people you care about deeply. You can include relatives, friends, or other special people who have been meaningful in your life. Under each name, note at least one way in which the person has shown his or her love.



LITERARY ANALYSIS: CHARACTERISTICS OF MYTHS

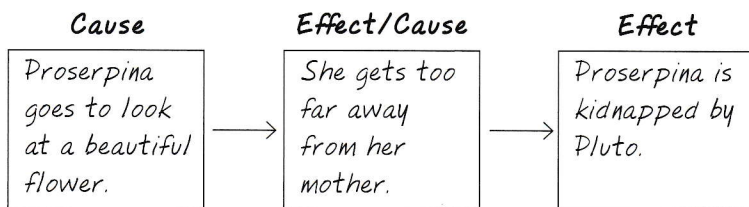
Classical myths are ancient stories that were used to explain the world and the gods and goddesses who ruled over it, shaping the lives of all humans. Passed down by word of mouth for generations, these myths

- explain how something in the world, such as the seas or the mountains, came to be
- feature gods, goddesses, and other beings with extraordinary powers. However, these beings often have the same emotions and weaknesses as humans.

As you read “The Story of Ceres and Proserpina,” notice what it explains about the natural world and the behavior of the gods.

READING SKILL: RECOGNIZE CAUSE AND EFFECT

The events of a story are often linked by cause-and-effect relationships. That is, one event acts as a **cause**, directly bringing about another event, or **effect**. The effect might, in turn, be the cause of another effect, creating a chain of events. As you read “The Story of Ceres and Proserpina,” look for cause-and-effect relationships. Record them in a graphic organizer like the one shown.



VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Mary Pope Osborne uses the listed words to help create a vivid setting for this myth. Choose the word that best completes each sentence.

WORD LIST barren chariot fertile shrouded

1. The ____ field produced an enormous crop of corn.
2. Two horses pulled a golden ____.
3. The ____ mountain was difficult to see.
4. The sandy desert was dry and ____.

Adventure Seeker

Mary Pope

Osborne grew up in a military family. By the time she was 15, she had lived in Austria, as well as a number of places in the United States. She continued to travel as an adult and once spent many months traveling through Asia. “I craved the adventure and changing scenery of our military life,” Osborne said.



Mary Pope Osborne
born 1949

Time Travel As children, Osborne and her brothers sought adventures everywhere they went. These adventures became the basis for Osborne’s most popular fiction series, *The Magic Tree House*, about a brother and sister who find books that transport them to distant times and places.

Background

Classical Mythology The myths told by the ancient Greeks and Romans are known as classical mythology. The earliest Greek myths appeared almost 3,000 years ago. When Rome conquered Greece around 178 B.C., the Romans adopted the Greek myths but changed the names of the gods to Roman names.



MORE ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND BACKGROUND

To learn more about Mary Pope Osborne and classical mythology, visit the **Literature Center** at ClassZone.com.

~ THE STORY OF ~ CERES AND PROSERPINA

RETOLD BY MARY POPE OSBORNE

One day Proserpina, the young maiden of spring, was picking wildflowers with her mother, Ceres, the goddess of grain. Entering the cool moist woods, Proserpina filled her basket with lilies and violets. But when she spied the white petals of the narcissus flower, she strayed far from her mother.

Just as Proserpina picked a beautiful narcissus, the earth began to rumble. Suddenly the ground cracked open, splitting fern beds and ripping flowers and trees from their roots. Then out of the dark depths sprang Pluto, god of the underworld. **A**

10 Standing up in his black **chariot**, Pluto ferociously drove his stallions toward Proserpina. The maiden screamed for her mother, but Ceres was far away and could not save her.

Pluto grabbed Proserpina and drove his chariot back into the earth. Then the ground closed up again, leaving not even a seam.

When the mountains echoed with Proserpina's screams, her mother rushed into the woods, but it was too late—her daughter had disappeared.

Beside herself with grief, Ceres began searching for her kidnapped daughter in every land. For nine days the goddess did not rest, but carried two torches through the cold nights, searching for Proserpina.

ANALYZE VISUALS

What can you tell about the girl's emotions, based on her body positioning and the fuzziness of the illustration?

A MYTHS

Reread lines 6–9. What extraordinary power is Pluto exhibiting?

chariot (chăr'ē-ət) *n.*
a two-wheeled vehicle used in ancient times

