

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Critical Survey of World Mythology and Folklore: World Mythology, by Salem Press, covers traditional literature from a broad range of regions and cultures in the world. This volume is distinguished by contemporary perspectives on the cultural contexts from which mythology and folklore originate, as well as by a balance between familiar and, for many readers, rarely read literature. In a period where cross-cultural understanding is particularly resonant, our aim is to provide students and their teachers with an advanced analysis of stories that continue to hold rich cultural meaning for peoples around the world.

This volume contains many kinds of texts that represent myth, fairy tales, folklore, oral tales, and a hybrid of genres in traditional literature. Rather than simply categories of myth and folklore, this collection offers an in-depth exploration of the diversity of storytelling that encompasses a broad realm of human experience, cultural belief, and religion. Readers will note common subjects in tales from widely divergent regions in the world. Creation, love and loss, adventure and bravery, and cultural heroes, readers will find, are important motifs in tales across cultures and periods.

The aim of this collection is to further the study of traditional literature in cultural and literary analysis. Designed for advanced high school and college students, essays emphasize the major approaches to analyzing mythology and folklore, including such commonly studied topics as gender, cross-cultural meaning, and religion, among other areas of contemporary interest. New readings of major authors in mythology and folklore are represented, from Homer and Ovid to the Brothers Grimm and Andrew Lang. In addition, tales from American Indian, African, Oceanic, and East Asian traditions, among other world cultures, are included. The editors' goal was to provide an inclusive collection that would serve as an authoritative introduction to traditional world literature.

ESSAY AND VOLUME FORMAT

The collection includes 213 essays, covering more than ten world regions and twenty-five cultures. The top

matter of each essay includes reference information on the author (when available), the country or culture of origin, the period in which the myth or tale originates, and the genre. Following a standard format, critical essays provide a condensed version of the story, introducing principle characters and actions, developed from authoritative sources. These condensed myths and tales will prepare readers to go on to read the primary sources in their entirety. Following the overview is an in-depth analysis grounded in the leading scholarship in the field. Each essay, of approximately one thousand to fifteen hundred words, offers a bibliography of additional readings for further research.

SUPPLEMENTAL FEATURES

- "Maps and Mythological Figures" presents twelve maps and charts detailing the cultural or geographic placement of many of the deities, authors, and tales in the volume.
- "Mythology in the Classroom" explains major approaches to studying mythology and fairy tales.
- A sample lesson plan, on creation stories, accompanies the essay on teaching mythology in the classroom. The aim is to provide one model for comparative analysis.
- A time line lists major authors, publications, and events related to mythology and traditional literature.
- A chronological index of titles and a culture and country index offer supplemental information on the overall coverage of the volume.

CONTRIBUTORS

Salem Press would like to extend its appreciation to all involved in the development and production of this work. The essays are written and signed by scholars and writers in a variety of disciplines in the humanities. Without these expert contributions, a project of this nature would not be possible. A full list of contributor's names and affiliations appears in the front matter of this volume.

MAPS AND MYTHOLOGICAL FIGURES

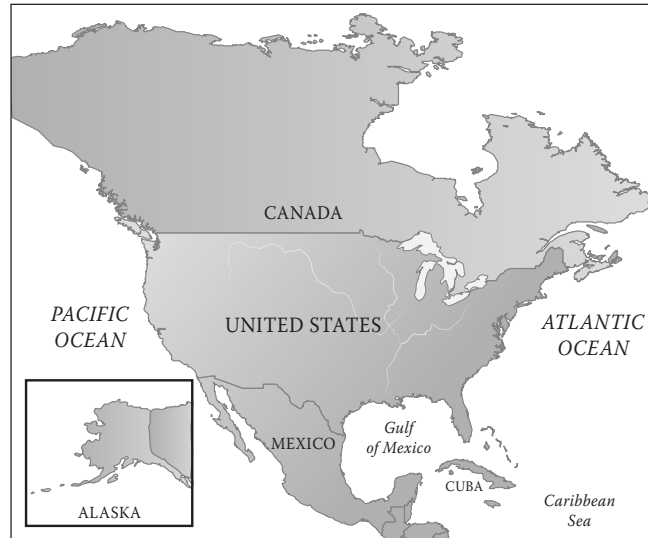
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GREEK MYTHOLOGICAL FIGURES

The Major Titans	Cult of the Twelve Olympians	Bestiary of Ancient Greece
<p>Koios (Coeus) Northern cosmic pillar holding heaven and earth apart</p> <p>Krios (Crius) Southern cosmic pillar</p> <p>Kronos (Cronus) God of time and the ages</p> <p>Hyperion Eastern cosmic pillar</p> <p>Iapetos (Iapetus) Western cosmic pillar and titan of mortal life</p> <p>Mnemosyne Goddess of memory, words, and language</p> <p>Okeanos (Oceanus) A primeval deity of the earth-encircling river</p> <p>Phoibe (Phoebe) Goddess of intellect</p> <p>Rhea Goddess of female fertility</p> <p>Tethys Mother of the rivers and springs</p> <p>Theia Mother of sun, moon, and dawn</p> <p>Themis Goddess of natural order and divine law</p>	<p>Aphroditê (Aphrodite) Goddess of beauty, love, procreation</p> <p>Apollôn (Apollo) God of prophecy and oracles, music, and healing</p> <p>Arês (Ares) God of war, battle, and manly courage</p> <p>Artemis Goddess of hunting, wilderness, and animals</p> <p>Athênê (Athena) Goddess of wise counsel, war, and heroism</p> <p>Dêmêtêr (Demeter) Goddess of agriculture, grain, and bread</p> <p>Dionysos (Dionysus) God of wine, vegetation, and pleasure</p> <p>Hêphaistos (Hephaestus) God of fire, metalworking, and sculpture</p> <p>Hêrê (Hera) Goddess of women and marriage</p> <p>Hermês (Hermes) God of animal husbandry, travel, language, and writing</p> <p>Poseidôn (Poseidon) God of the sea, rivers, flood, and drought</p> <p>Zeus God of sky and weather, justice, and fate</p>	<p>Khimaira (Chimera) A fire-breathing monster slain by Bellerophon astride the winged horse Pegasus</p> <p>Drakôn Kolkhikos (Colchian Dragon) Guard of the Golden Fleece; slain by Jason</p> <p>Kêtos Aithiopios (Ethiopian Cetus) A sea monster slain by Perseus</p> <p>Grypes (Griffins) Lions with the head and wings of eagles</p> <p>Harpia (Harpies) Directed by Zeus to steal away people from earth</p> <p>Hydra Lernaia (Lernaea) A nine-headed water serpent slain by Hercules</p> <p>Drakôn Ismenios (Ismenian Dragon) A giant serpent slain by Cadmus</p> <p>Drakôn Ladôn (Ladon) A hundred-headed dragon slain by Heracles</p> <p>Drakôn Pterôtoi (Winged Dragons) Two winged serpents used by Medea to escape Corinth</p> <p>Pythôn (Python) A giant serpent slain by Apollo</p> <p>Seirênes (Sirens) Three sea nymphs who sang to lure sailors to drown</p>

NORTH AMERICA



◆ The Fight with the Water Monster

Author: Traditional Wabanaki

Time Period: 1001 CE–1500 CE

Country or Culture: North America

Genre: Folktale

PLOT SUMMARY

The Wabanaki man-god Glooskap is a powerful immortal hero who protects the world from evil. Considered a spirit and a man of medicine, he is also responsible for making the animals that roam the earth today. For example, when Glooskap first came to the earth, he noticed that squirrels and beavers were far too large to live in the world without causing untold damage to it. He therefore shrank them to their present sizes. Glooskap is benevolent and willing to help humanity—he created a village, teaching the people who lived there how to hunt, fish, and happily live harmony with another—but occasionally tires of his many responsibilities and paddles away to rest in what is now Nova Scotia.

The village only has one water source, a spring containing fresh and clean water. One day, however, the spring ceases to flow, so a man from the village travels upstream to see what has happened. He comes across a tribe of amphibious people, who live along a lake of stinking, slime-covered water. The lake is the spring, dammed up in this area. The people tell the villager that they cannot give him any water because their chief wants all of the water for himself. The man asks to meet the chief and is brought before him, only to discover that the chief is in fact a gigantic water monster. When the man asks him to release the water downstream, the monster simply laughs and threatens to kill him. Unsuccessful in restoring the flow of water, the man returns to his village and reports that the situation is hopeless.

The man-god Glooskap, however, becomes aware of the situation and tells the people not to despair, saying that he will visit the monster. When Glooskap finds the monster, the giant bullfrog laughs at his request and threatens to swallow Glooskap whole. The hero becomes enraged, making himself into a giant, towering above the monster. He gets ready for war and removes a mountaintop, which he forges into a very sharp spear

tip. The monster attempts to eat Glooskap, and a thunderous battle ensues. Glooskap uses the flint spear he has created to split wide open the beast's stomach and all of the water the monster consumed flows downstream again in a great river. Glooskap takes the shrunken water monster in his hand and squeezes the water from it with great force—which is why frogs came to have bumps and wrinkles on their backs—eventually throwing the former monster into a swamp.

Glooskap returns to the village victorious. The people in the village, however, become rebellious, and Glooskap decides not to live among them anymore. He returns to the river in his canoe, leaving the village behind, as the loons and other water birds cry mournfully at his departure to the end of the world.

SIGNIFICANCE

The story of Glooskap's fight with the water monster is demonstrative of this figure's many abilities and characteristics. Glooskap is both a man and a god, capable of doing anything. He brings happiness and guidance to humanity and is capable of making people laugh and love one another. He is also a fierce warrior, imbued with great powers that he uses to defend the world against evil. Although he occasionally grows tired of his tasks, he never loses his love or dedication to the good inhabitants of the earth. In light of these many otherworldly abilities, Glooskap is similar to many legendary heroes of ancient Greece (such as Oedipus), Egypt (including Horus), and even the folklore of early Christianity (such as St. George, who slays a dragon to protect townspeople and convert them).

However, Glooskap is also a creator. He regulates the size of all animals, ensuring that they will live in harmony with humans. According to a continuation of this story (a version told by the Passamaquoddy and Micmac tribes), after Glooskap vanquishes the water monster, he returns to find the people of the village so joyful at life in the water that they wish to live in it. He therefore helps them become fish, crabs, leeches, and other water creatures, living in the river that he created by his battle.

This story of Glooskap was revealed to the rest of the world by Silas Tertius Rand, a Nova Scotian missionary traveling into Wabanaki territory (in a large portion along the Atlantic seaboard) during the late nineteenth century. Glooskap is said to have formed many of the region's geographic features in addition to reducing the size of the animals there. This story provides examples of both actions. During his battle with the water monster,

Glooskap levels a mountain peak to create a spear; when he vanquishes his enemy, he creates a slash a mile wide across the frog's stomach, creating a mighty river that leads to the sea. Meanwhile, he squeezes the frog down to its unique size and appearance.

In addition to providing explanations for elements of the natural world, the story also invites people to follow Glooskap's example. He is a benevolent figure but tires of the people when they become insolent or self-centered. When ordinary people fail to adhere to his teachings, Glooskap takes his leave of them and returns to his home. Although it is implied that he will never truly leave humanity, Glooskap's departure at the end of this story leaves the people and animals mournful.

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◆ George Washington: I Cannot Tell a Lie

Author: Mason Locke Weems

Time Period: 1701 CE–1850 CE

Country or Culture: North America

Genre: Legend

PLOT SUMMARY

Mason Locke Weems's famous tale of George Washington and the cherry tree appears in chapter 2 of his narrative *The Life of Washington*. After briefly introducing

Washington's childhood, Weems presents truth as a theme in the boy's history. He praises at length the boy's honesty, as testified by his father, who delivers a speech in which he praises honesty and then declaims its opposite. He describes truth as the best quality of youth and swears that he would ride fifty miles to see a boy who is so honest that every word he speaks is dependable. Everyone loves such a boy: parents and relatives exalt him endlessly and beg his peers to follow his angelic example. In contrast, a dishonest boy has no credibility and is actively shunned by other parents.

Mr. Washington assures the young George of his affection but declares, "Gladly would I assist to nail you up in your little coffin, and follow you to your grave" rather than know that his son is a liar (Weems 9). To this, George asks whether he has ever told lies. The father replies with great relief that George is impeccably honest, and he condemns parents who inadvertently encourage lying by beating their children for the offense, which then encourages further lying to avoid additional abuse. He urges young George that when he errs, he should come to his father "like a little man" (9) and confess the deed, and he promises to honor rather than punish the boy.

As evidence of George's honesty and his father's sound parenting, Weems then offers the famous anecdote. At six years old, George receives a hatchet as a gift. "Like most little boys," Weems notes, George is "immoderately fond" of the tool, so he proceeds to chop "every thing that came in his way" (9–10). In the family garden, where he is accustomed to cutting his mother's pea stalks, he turns his hatchet on an English cherry tree. When his father discovers that one of his favorite trees has been irreparably damaged, he enters the house to determine who is responsible.

At first, no one comes forward with information about the deed, but then George presents himself, and his father asks him directly whether he knows who has destroyed the tree. George does not answer immediately as he struggles with the question, but then he looks squarely at his father and admits, "I can't tell a lie, Pa; you know I can't tell a lie. I did cut it with my hatchet" (10). The father's elation at his son's honesty is immediate and unequivocal. "Such an act of heroism in my son," he proclaims, "is more worth than a thousand trees though blossomed with silver, and their fruits of purest gold" (10).

SIGNIFICANCE

The tone of Weems's language in the story of Washington and the cherry tree is exultant and, along with other

elements of the tale, serves to mythologize the first US president as a man of flawless virtue from the time of his boyhood. The intent to mythologize evolved over several years; Weems's 1806 work *The Life of Washington the Great*, in which the tale first appeared, was the fifth edition of an earlier, modestly successful biography that he had first published in 1800. The earlier edition was less enticingly titled *The Life and Memorable Actions of George Washington* and did not feature the legend of the cherry tree. This late addition is one sign that Weems invented the cherry tree anecdote. However, Robert G. Miner explains in his preface to the work that Weems sought to exalt and mythologize George Washington just as other nations had done with their national heroes. Weems saw an opportunity to create in Washington a virtuous hero specifically for young people to emulate. Miner describes Weems's objective clearly: "Weems was not concerned with reality. His 'mishandling' of the facts of Washington's early life is a *myth*-handling, a journey beyond mere history to the collective unconscious of the nation" (ix).

Interestingly, Weems constructs Washington's heroism by underscoring the meaning of his virtue not in public but in private terms, which he claims have special meaning, particularly for his target audience of children. In chapter 1, Weems forcefully makes the argument that it is not the public life of military exploits and statesmanship that matter but private life, because "private life is always real life" (4). His biography is necessary, he claims, because nothing has been written of the private roles that Washington played: "the dutiful son; the affectionate brother; the cheerful school-boy; the diligent surveyor; the neat draftsman; the laborious farmer; the widow's husband; the orphan's father . . . and poor man's friend" (4). He argues that these private virtues are important because they form the basis of strong character and all the achievements that stem from it. Moreover, Washington's private virtues are relevant to children because they generally care most about character, and although the vast majority of young people cannot hope to aspire to Washington's great deeds, they can aspire to match his personal virtue. This claim to represent Washington's private virtue via true childhood anecdotes reveals Weems's rhetorical effectiveness and explains some historians' objections to the semifictional nature of this biography.

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◆ The Girl Who Married a Gnome

Author: Traditional Inuit

Time Period: 1001 CE–1500 CE

Country or Culture: North America

Genre: Folktale

PLOT SUMMARY

A young woman named Arouk lives with her parents in a sealskin tent near a beautiful fjord. Arouk desperately wants to marry, but her father has yet to meet a man who is good enough for her. One day an unfamiliar man appears in his kayak and calls out to Arouk by name. When she peeks through the tent flap, her father yells at the man to go away. Instead of leaving, the young man starts to walk right up to the tent, which angers the father and incites a shoving match. After the father is pushed to the ground by the stranger, he throws a rock at the young man's head and knocks him unconscious.

Fearing for his life, Arouk's father then orders his wife and daughter to pack their belongings. Just as the young man regains consciousness, they paddle safely away from the fjord, though they cannot ignore the man's menacing voice threatening them, vowing that Arouk will never marry and her family will never be fed if they are starving. After paddling all day, the family reaches an island where there is an abandoned house. They live there happily for a long time and make the island their home.

One day, much to her parents' surprise, Arouk announces that she is married, although when her father first sees his son-in-law he thinks he is hallucinating, for the man is a tiny atliarusek, or gnome. When Arouk confesses to the marriage, the father is quite happy, especially when the gnome hunts food for them.

One day the gnome says that he must leave Arouk temporarily to visit his family. Arouk and her parents insist upon following his kayak in their umiak. As they travel toward the fjord, other gnomes join them. At one point, the gnomes travel under the water so they cannot be seen, but they eventually resurface. Finally, the caravan reaches the Valley of the Caribou, where Arouk and her family stay all summer and fill their umiak with meat and furs.

Upon arriving home, Arouk's father hears that the families in their old village are starving to death. After some consideration, he decides to bundle up some meat and hides and return to the village. When he arrives, rather than being greeted by grateful friends and neighbors, he is spoken to harshly, especially by the young man who had threatened him years earlier. He is ridiculed for lying about his hunting prowess and for claiming to have procured all that meat without a son-in-law.

The father leaves the food behind in anger and returns home furious about their lack of appreciation. When he expresses his feelings, his son-in-law suggests that he invite the villagers to their home for a feast. The father immediately warms to the idea. Soon the old neighbors appear in their kayaks, including all of the young men whom he had rejected for his daughter, and they begin to feast on dishes made from seal and caribou. Meanwhile, the father takes advantage of their presence and proceeds to speak to them about their insensitivity, especially regarding the treatment he received from his daughter's belligerent suitor. Most of the guests express remorse and shame. When he is finished, he has made peace with the villagers, and they with him.

SIGNIFICANCE

Unlike Irish leprechauns or Norse elves, the venerated “little people” in European mythology and literature, gnomes do not feature as prominently in Inuit culture. The story of the girl who married a gnome was first collected by Dr. Hinrich Johannes Rink and published in *Tales and Traditions of the Eskimo* (1875). In Greenland, gnomes were called *atliaruseks* or *ingnersuaks* and were believed to live within rocks along the shores where they interacted with humans as they fished and hunted from their kayaks and umiaks. They were mostly benevolent creatures and were considered guardians of humans, although they were capable of inflicting harm or creating unwanted mischief.

This folktale conveys much about Inuit family life, marriage, and social values and the challenges to Inuit survival. In Inuit society, men were the hunters and were thus responsible for feeding their families. Hunting, then, was more than a desirable skill in a husband; it was crucial for survival.

When seal, whale, fish, and other sea life were plentiful, families would congregate together near the coastline. During the summers, hunters also chased reindeer inland to places such as the Valley of the Caribou. The sharing of meat and skins between villagers—many of whom were related—was commonplace, and community-wide feasts often marked successful hunts. During famines, the sharing of food between neighbors and relatives became especially crucial. Both the Inuit father and his gnome son-in-law in the tale, then, demonstrate a strong sense of conscience toward their fellow villagers when they share their food not just once but twice. The tale also serves to provide a means to teach societal and familial values from generation to generation.

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◆ How Jack O’Lanterns Came to Be

Author: Zora Neale Hurston

Time Period: 1851 CE–1900 CE; 1901 CE–1950 CE

Country or Culture: North America

Genre: Folktale

PLOT SUMMARY

During the time of slavery, there is an incredibly strong and large slave named Big Sixteen, so called because of his shoe size. Big Sixteen’s slave master recognizes how powerful he is and assigns him the most arduous tasks around the plantation. One day, the slave master tells him to go retrieve heavy twelve-by-twelve sills that have been left in a swamp. This seems like an impossible task for one man, but Big Sixteen brings all of the sills back to the slave master’s house and stacks them himself.

After the chore with the sills is complete, the slave master instructs Big Sixteen to go and retrieve some mules that are out in the pasture. The mules are stubborn and uncooperative when Big Sixteen tries to lead them along by their bridles. The bridles snap, so he picks a mule up under each arm and brings them back to the slave master that way.

Surprised by Big Sixteen’s astonishing strength, the slave master says that if he is strong enough to carry mules under his arms, then he must be strong enough to catch the Devil. Big Sixteen agrees to the task, as long as he is supplied with a nine-pound hammer, a pick, and a shovel. The slave master gives Big Sixteen these tools, and the slave goes to work digging his way down to Hell. It takes him nearly a month of digging to reach the Devil’s house. Upon arriving, Big Sixteen knocks on the door. When the Devil pokes his head out, Big Sixteen smashes him over the head with the hammer, killing him. He carries the Devil back up to the slave master, who is shocked that Big Sixteen was actually able to

catch him. Repulsed by the sight of the corpse, the slave master tells Big Sixteen to throw the Devil back down to Hell, which he does.

Big Sixteen lives for many years after this event. When he does die, Big Sixteen goes up to Heaven. Saint Peter looks at him and sees that he is too powerful to reside there. Fearing that Big Sixteen might cause trouble, Saint Peter tells him to leave. With nowhere else to go, Big Sixteen goes down to Hell.

The Devil's children are playing near the gates of Hell when they spot Big Sixteen. They recognize him as the man who killed their father and begin to call for their mother. The Devil's wife yells for the children to run inside the house. When Big Sixteen gets to the door, the wife says he is not allowed in Hell. She hands him a flaming hot coal and tells him to go start a hell of his own.

People who see a jack o'lantern in the woods at night know that it is Big Sixteen wandering around with his coal, looking for a place to rest for eternity.

SIGNIFICANCE

When enslaved Africans were brought over to the Americas, they brought their long tradition of storytelling with them. Since slaves were prohibited from learning how to read and write, it became essential for them to pass on their histories, morals, and folklore orally to preserve their cultural heritages. Generations of storytellers passed on traditional songs, legends, folktales, proverbs, and other orally transmitted traditions. This strong oral tradition helped enslaved Africans hold onto their cultural identity and values while adapting to their harsh new environment in America.

Many African American folktales provided exaggerated and sometimes humorous explanations for the creation of certain things. For example, there are stories about how snakes became poisonous and how possums lost the hair on their tail. These folktales are also colloquially referred to as "lies" and are similar to American tall tales. Other types of African American folktales include fables centered on animals and stories of trickster slaves who outsmart their masters. The tricksters in these stories are often named John or Jack. Oftentimes, perhaps because of their situation, many folktales created by slaves are concerned with escape and fantasy.

The folk hero of Big Sixteen is one such fantasy, as he possesses superhuman strength and stature. He is strong enough to kill the Devil, in fact. He can be compared to American tall-tale characters such as Paul Bunyan and

John Henry, who is possibly the best-known African American tall-tale hero. Since any sign of verbal defiance or strength might be seen as a threat to the slave master, tall tales of superhuman characters such as Big Sixteen were rare in African American folklore until after emancipation.

"How Jack O'Lanterns Came to Be" is an example of an exaggeration story. The story explains the origins of jack o'lanterns, which, besides being a contemporary Halloween tradition, are prevalent in folktales around the globe. This African American version is similar in its conclusion to many of the other stories, particularly the Irish folktale "Stingy Jack." In this tale, a man named Jack manages to trap the Devil. He later frees him under the condition that when he dies, the Devil will not claim Jack's soul in Hell. The Devil agrees, but when Jack dies, he is refused entrance into Heaven. The Devil insultingly gives Jack a hot coal to light his way as he wanders the earth. Jack carves out a turnip, into which he puts the burning coal, and is thereafter known as Jack of the Lantern or Jack O'Lantern.

It is commonly believed that jack o'lantern stories evolved from will-o'-the-wisp stories, which can also be found in folk traditions around the globe. The will-o'-the-wisps refer to ghostly lights or orbs that have frequently been seen at night, typically around swamps and marshes. In many folktales, these lights draw travelers off their path. "How Jack O'Lanterns Came to Be" can be read as the African American version of these various tales.

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MYTHOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

With the great interest in mythology—both classical and comparative—a plethora of books have emerged appealing not only to the general reader but also to teachers and students. The books in this series are part of this profusion. How then are teachers and students to make the best use of the reference works in this series?

In order to evaluate the role that volumes in this series would play in a classroom course, it may be useful to briefly outline the goals and challenges in teaching a mythology course. There are basically two major approaches. At a minimal level students should become competent in recognizing the stories, characteristics, and attributes (many instructors would include visual representations here) of mythological characters. Such competency should also allow students to recognize allusions from later literature and art to contemporary political slogans and commercials. Here, textbooks with summaries of the stories would serve the purpose. Through this basic recognition of the stories and allusions it is argued that students will improve their reading and understanding of texts. The second approach is to read translations of the primary texts of mythology. This approach teaches a different type of reading in which students encounter multiple levels of meaning, nonlinear presentation, archaic thought patterns, and so forth. Such an approach is challenging both for students and teachers.

Other challenges confront instructors of mythology courses. These courses call upon instructors to be knowledgeable in more areas of expertise than any other course that they teach: language and literature, myth theory, archeology and art, history, anthropology, and psychology, to name a few. In comparative or world myth courses, instructors often teach stories that are outside their field of expertise. How then do the volumes of this series address these goals and challenges?

A brief overview of the format of each volume gives a starting point in answering this question. Each volume consists of articles summarizing and analyzing myths, fairy tales, legends, sagas, and folktales on a certain theme (e.g., love, heroes) from various cultures around the world. Each article, where possible, highlights an interpretative or theoretical approach. Part of the article focuses on cross-cultural comparisons and closely analyzes at least one retelling of the tale in art, film, music, and so forth.

COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY

Given the diversity of the texts and genres, these volumes would appeal more to a comparative mythology course rather than to a classical mythology class, although instructors in the latter course could still refer their students to relevant articles on Greco-Roman myths. In comparing myths from different cultures, scholars have focused on accounting for the similarities between them. In this respect, many myth courses outline two basic approaches: diffusion and similar thought patterns. The diffusionist approach received its greatest impetus from the discovery of the Indo-European languages in the late 1700s and the subsequent development of I-E linguistics in the following century. Just as linguists could compare words and grammatical and syntactical forms and attempt to reconstruct a protolanguage, those analyzing mythology also hoped to work out relations between mythologies. The method often involves locating common elements that are unique to the two myths being compared. An example would be the birds sent out in the Mesopotamian and biblical flood stories. If enough of these unique common elements can be found, then a genetic relationship can be posited about the two myths. The other approach postulates that the similarities between myths arise from similar thought patterns. Thus Carl Jung posited the universal unconscious and its archetypes, and Joseph Campbell regarded myths as following his monomythic pattern. Yet interpreters of mythology must also take context into account (and the best interpreters of either stripe do). Sources need to be evaluated; learning as much as one can about the dating, storytellers, and audience is a necessity. Differences between the stories should also be explored in detail (discussed below under Interpretative Approaches).

For a comparative mythology course, the articles in these volumes could serve as a basis for the exploration of a theme. Whether the student has been reading primary sources or a summary of the tale, the article furnishes a starting point for obtaining a deeper understanding of the story under consideration. The articles are written by scholars knowledgeable in their respective fields. This aspect of expertise is one of the major challenges in the teaching of comparative mythology, as noted above. Apart from calling in colleagues who are experts in their fields, such articles as are found here fulfill this pressing need. They show how a scholar who studies the culture

LESSON PLAN

CREATION STORIES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Students analyze the origin of humans and the natural world in Maya and Egyptian creation myths. In addition, students analyze metaphor and language in the representation of the human and natural world.

Materials: E. A. Wallis Budge's "The Legend of the God Neb-er-tcher, and the History of Creation"; Dennis Tedlock's *Popol Vuh*, Part 4.

Overview Questions

Every culture in the world is rooted in multiple creation myths to explain the beginnings of the human, animal, and natural world. These primordial questions often ground spiritual or religious belief. What is the mythic message these creation stories tell of their cultures?

Discussion Questions

1. How is the form of storytelling different in the selections from "The Legend of the God Neb-er-tcher" and the *Popol Vuh*? Who are the speakers?
2. In creation myths, the use of metaphor often attributes human characteristics to nature or the animal world. What human characteristics are used? What perspectives on creation are depicted in these metaphors?
3. In the two creation myths, what is the relationship between the human and natural worlds? Are they in harmony or disjunction? Which animals are mentioned in the stories? How are they depicted?
4. What is the order of phenomena in the human and nonhuman spheres? What is atop this order? What place does the earth hold in this order?
5. The stories of Neb-er-tcher and of the Maya creator gods depict differing powers of creation and destruction. Is creation a benevolent or violent event in these stories? Why?
6. Creation myths often speak to human truths of love, fear, and power. What is the spiritual (or spirit) dimension described in the stories?

Comparative Study

How do these creation myths compare with stories of creation in your own cultural background? The story of Neb-er-tcher and the *Popol Vuh* are rooted in a divine relation between nature and the human world. What is the significance of the natural world in creation myths in your culture?

Response Paper

Word length and additional requirements set by Instructor. Students answer the research question in the Overview Questions. Students state a thesis and use as evidence passages from the primary source document as well as support from supplemental materials assigned in the lesson.

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