



Myths and Legends

Oxford Level 13

How the World Began

Author: Fiona MacDonald

Teaching Notes author: Gillian Howell

Information about assessment and curriculum links can be found at the end of these Teaching Notes.

Synopsis

This book features five creation myths from around the world.

- *Pan Gu and the Egg*: The world is formed when a giant named Pan Gu breaks out of an egg. The eggshell becomes the sky and earth, while Pan Gu's body becomes the many features of the earth and sky.
- *Moon and Morning Star*: At first the world was in darkness. Then, when the first ever people, called Man-Who-Brings-Light and Shining Woman, first wake, their dreams have created everything they need to help the world come to life.
- *Oran Mor*: This Celtic myth describes 'The Song of Life' created by the goddess when she took pity on the dead world that had no water.
- *Tagaloa's Rock*: This myth tells how Tagaloa first created the sky and then the sea. He grew tired, so created an island to rest on. He then created all the islands of the South Pacific.
- *Something Special*: This Aboriginal myth describes how two god spirits, called the Brothers, scraped the mud from two 'Somethings' to discover the first humans.

Background information

- *Pan Gu and the Egg*: First written down by Chinese monks in the third century BC, but probably about a thousand years older. Pan Gu's division of the egg into earth and sky parallels the Chinese philosophical concept of Yin and Yang. (Yin = dark, passive, damp, female; Yang = light, active, dry, male.) As well as creating the world, Pan Gu's action also creates order from chaos.
- *Moon and Morning Star*: This is a Wichita Native American myth, whose traditional homeland is in Oklahoma and Southern Texas, in North America. It tells of a world in which there is a great Creator Spirit and also supernatural beings, such as Moon and Morning Star, who act as messengers, teachers and guardians. It includes the idea of knowledge and skill as gifts to be shared, and for which people should be thankful. Traditionally, maize (corn on the cob) was the staple food of Native American farming peoples living in temperate/warm climates. In this myth, women share responsibility, and have important – but different – tasks. Historically, many Native American women played an active part in farming.
- *Oran Mor*: This creation myth is closely aligned with the ancient Celtic or Druidic religions. It means 'The Song of Life', sometimes called 'The Great Melody'.
- *Tagaloa's Rock*: A myth from Samoa, a group of islands in the Pacific Ocean. It explains how Samoa and many other Pacific islands came to be created and populated. Many different versions of the myth exist. In some, Tagaloa creates the sea and sky as well as dry land; in others, he creates just the Polynesian islands. But the story of how he created people from worms spawned by leaves is widespread.
- *Something Special*: In this Aboriginal myth, the Brothers (guardian gods/spirits) uncover and foster human life (they do not create it). Their full name is the Numbakulla brothers. The myth describes the unity of people and nature. The 'Somethings' (first humans) become the Ancestors of the Arrernte people of Central Australia. This myth links to the wider Aboriginal concept of the Dreamtime. This is an ecstatic/magical experience, often called an 'eternal present', in which all of creation is continually celebrated and renewed.



Myths and Legends

Group or guided reading

Introducing the book

- (*Questioning, Clarifying, Predicting*) Look at the front cover and read the title. Read the contents list and ask the children to speculate on what the stories might be about. Do they think the stories will all describe the same thing? If necessary, explain that these are creation myths. Invite them to read the letter from the author on page 2.
- (*Clarifying*) Invite the children to look briefly through the book, focusing on the illustrations. Discuss how important they think the illustrations are in setting the contexts.

Strategy check

- Remind the children to use the sounds of letters to work out new and unfamiliar words. Point to the words 'surrounded' on page 4 and 'dreadfully' on page 5. Ask volunteers to read the words and suggest strategies for working them out if the children are unsure.
- If the children meet words where the meaning is unclear, remind them to read the whole sentence and work out the meaning from the context.

During reading

- (*Clarifying*) Invite the children to read *Pan Gu and the Egg* and *Tagaloa's Rock* first. Explain that you want them to identify similarities and differences in the two stories.
- As the children read independently, listen to them in turn and prompt as necessary. Note the strategies used to decode words.

Independent reading

Objective: Interrogate texts to deepen and clarify understanding and response.

(*Questioning, Clarifying, Deducing*)

- Provide the children with the following questions to help them find the common elements and the differences:
 - What sort of being is the creator in these stories?
 - What is created first?
 - Why did Pan Gu need to rest?
 - Why did Tagaloa need to rest?
 - How did Pan Gu create the features of the earth?
 - How did Tagaloa create the features of the earth?
 - What is created in each story?
- When the children have read the stories, invite them to share their opinions about the similarities and differences, showing evidence in the text.
- Invite the children to read the remaining stories independently

Assessment:

- Can the children scan the text to find answers to the questions?

Returning and responding to the text

Objective: Explain how writers use figurative and expressive language to create images and atmosphere.

Myths and Legends

(Clarifying, Deducing, Imagining)

- Focus on the story, Moon and Morning Star.
- Look at page 15. Ask the children to explain how the author contrasts what the Great Spirit can see and what the world was like in the dark.
- On pages 23–24, how does the author's description make the children feel? Why does the author end the page with an ellipsis?
- Focus on Oran Mor. Ask the children to say what the difference is in the sentences on page 27 and those on page 28. Why do they think the author used short and incomplete sentences, then long sentences when the goddess starts the rain?
- Focus on Something Special and turn to page 53. Ask the children to describe the effect of the words 'squelchy', 'quivering' and 'trembling'. How do these words make them feel?
- Invite the children to choose the story from the collection they prefer and to give reasons for their choice.

Assessment: Check that the children:

- can find evidence in the text to support their ideas about each story.
- can explain how the authors' use of language affects the atmosphere of the stories.
- can identify common features of the stories.

Speaking and listening activities

Objective: Tell stories effectively and convey detailed information coherently for listeners.

- Ask the children to work with a partner. Invite them each to choose a different story and, using the illustrations as a prompt, retell the story. Encourage them to add detail and expressive language. Ask them to evaluate each other's use of story language and sequencing of events.

Assessment:

- Can the children listen carefully to each other's retellings and comment effectively?

Writing activities

Objective: Use settings and characterisation to engage readers' interest.

- Discuss an imaginary world without water, plants, animals or people with the children. Draw up a list of their ideas. Ask them to imagine a being that can bring the world to life. Draw up a list of their different ideas about how the being would act.
- Invite the children to write a paragraph describing the setting (the world before life) and another paragraph sketching the character of their being.

Assessment:

- Can the children use imaginative and expressive descriptions of their own or do they borrow their descriptions from the text?

Cross-curricular links

Geography

- Find China, North America, Samoa and Australia in an atlas or on a globe.
- Research countries that can be described as Celtic.
- Find the names of other islands in the South Pacific.

Oxford
OWL

For teachers

Helping you with free eBooks, inspirational resources, advice and support

For parents

Helping your child's learning with free eBooks, essential tips and fun activities



www.oxfordowl.co.uk

How the World Began (Oxford Level 13) curriculum coverage chart

Links to Oxford Reading Criterion Scale:

Reading

- Can read independently using a range of strategies to decode unfamiliar words and to establish meaning (e.g. self-correcting, widening knowledge of vocabulary). (READ) [ORCS Standard 4, 1]
- Can make choices about which texts to read based on and referring back to prior reading experience, expressing preferences and comparing texts. (E) [ORCS Standard 4, 7]
- Is able to quote directly from the text to answer questions. (R) [ORCS Standard 4, 12]
- Is beginning to skim read texts to gather the general impression of what has been written. (R) [ORCS Standard 4, 13]
- Is beginning to scan texts to locate specific information. (R) [ORCS Standard 4, 14]
- Can identify language the author has chosen to create images and build mood and tension. (E) [ORCS Standard 4, 19]

Comprehension strategies

- Comprehension strategies are taught throughout the Teaching Notes to enable pupils to understand what they are reading in books that they can read independently. In these Teaching Notes the following strategies are taught: *Predicting, Questioning, Clarifying, Imagining, Deducing*

ENGLAND The National Curriculum in England: Years 3–4

Spoken language	Pupils should be taught to give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including expressing feelings (SpokLang.5)
Reading: Comprehension	Pupils should be taught to understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with detailed evidence predicting what might happen from details stated and implied (Y3/4 ReadComp.2iii) Pupils should be taught to understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by identifying how language, structure, and presentation contribute to meaning (Y3/4 ReadComp.2vi)
Writing: Composition	Pupils should be taught to draft and write by in narratives, creating settings, characters and plot (Y3/4 WritComp.2iii)

SCOTLAND Curriculum for Excellence: Literacy and English experiences and outcomes – First level

Listening and talking	I can select ideas and relevant information, organise these in a logical sequence and use words which will be interesting and/or useful for others (LIT 1-06a)
Reading	To show my understanding, I can respond to different kinds of questions and other close reading tasks and I am learning to create some questions of my own (ENG 1-17a) I can share my thoughts about structure, characters and/or setting [...], and comment on the effective choice of words and other features (ENG 1-19a)
Writing	By considering the type of text I am creating, I can select ideas and relevant information [...] and use words which will be interesting and/or useful for others (LIT 1-26a)

WALES Programme of Study for English: Year 3

Oracy	Learners are able to organise what they say so that listeners can understand, e.g. emphasising key points, sequencing an explanation (Y3_OracSpea.2)
Reading	Learners are able to read aloud using punctuation to aid expression (Y3_ReadStrat.4) Learners are able to deduce ideas and information by linking explicit statements, e.g. cause and effect (Y3_ReadComp.2)
Writing	Learners are able to write for different purposes and readers choosing words for variety and interest (Y3_WritMean.1)

NORTHERN IRELAND Levels of Progression in Communication across the curriculum: Primary Level 2

Talking and listening	Pupils can talk about events in sequence with supporting detail (L2_com_talk.4)
Reading	Pupils can recognise some forms and features of texts (L2_com_read.4) Pupils can ask questions to seek clarification that develops understanding (L2_com_read.5i)
Writing	Pupils can express thoughts, feelings and ideas, from within their experience, using a general vocabulary (L2_com_writ.2i)