

Volcanic myths and legends

Introduction

“Myths and rituals help people cope with disaster, albeit in a very different way.” - John Dvorak, geoscientist at the University of Hawaii

Myths and legends surrounding volcanoes in the Pacific Northwest region date back millennia – some as old as 8,000 years to be exact. Long thought to be simple stories and tall tales, we now have geological and archaeological evidence that can help trace back some of these legends to actual eruptions – as the following article from the BBC attests to.



After you read this article

(<http://www.bbc.com/earth/story/20150318-why-volcano-myths-are-true>), consider the following questions:

- How do you think myths and legends surrounding volcanoes help people cope with disaster?
- What role did these myths and legends play in pre-scientific societies?
- In your opinion, can myths and legends still have a useful role today? Why or why not?



As far-fetched and fantastic as they may seem to us today, many myths – whether they are religious, natural, or simply moral tales – have their origins in actual historical events. Imagine that in the far-distant future, only small remnants of humans are left on planet Earth, and the only records that have survived of humanity’s past belong to oral traditions. **What kinds of stories do you think people would tell about our time period?**



Imagine that 2,000 years in the future, humanity has reverted to a ‘dark age’ following some apocalyptic event – or perhaps the slow result of climate change – and we no longer have an accurate and precise historical record. The Internet was wiped out long ago and books are a rare commodity. Everything we know in the year 4018 A.D. has been largely passed down through oral tradition. Pick a major world event that happened in your own lifetime, or relatively recently, and create a mythological tale that would be understood by a person with little knowledge of ‘modern’ science and data.



All stories adhere to some common archetypes – and myths are no different. Take a look at this list of common creation myths (<http://www.cs.williams.edu/~lindsey/myths/myths.html>), and pick at least **three to four themes** that you will include in your myth. Be as creative as you want! But remember, that your myth should be based on an actual historical event – and preferably one that most people today would be aware of. Think big!



You have **two submission options** for this activity. Please **choose one of the following**:

(1) Present your myth in written form – or as a transcribed dialogue – in at least **one to two pages**. You will accompany this with a **three to four paragraph reflection** that addresses the questions above and briefly explains your myth in further detail. You are welcome to include images and illustrations.

-OR-

(2) Create a short film or narrated slideshow about your myth. Your video should be at least five to six minutes in length. At least **five to six minutes** retelling the myth and an **additional four to five minutes** addressing the questions above.