

Writing a Creation Myth

A myth has been defined as "a story embodying and declaring a pattern of relationship between humanity, other forms of life, and the environment" (R. J. Stewart). As such, myths and creation accounts and stories help to provide a unifying framework for the people who believe, either literally or figuratively, in this shared account. It is not a falsehood or an unscientific lie; rather, it is a poetic and shared vision.

Some of these mythic elements that derive from the Oral Tradition are: 1) The use of repetition for emphasis and ease of recall; 2) The use of poetic devices such as alliteration, personification, metaphor and simile, and symbolism; 3) A concern with numbers, often times repeated; 4) The power of "The Word" (Logos) and the subsequent use of concrete nouns to label important elements (both human and non-human).

This week you will be writing your own Creation Myths! This is intended to be a fun and creative assignment, so use your imagination!

Think of a natural phenomenon that you would like to explain. Pick one natural phenomena and create a myth that explains how this phenomenon was created or why it acts the way it does. Remember, most myths have two functions:

1. Explain how something was created or why it is the way it is.
2. Teach us a life lesson (Have a theme).

Think back to the myths we have read in class as an example of what a good myth does. Write an original creation myth following the writing process. Be sure to include all the elements of a myth: characters, setting, conflict, plot, resolution, and possibly metamorphosis.

Some ideas for you if you are really stuck:

- how cats got their tails
- how the sun came into being
- why the moon disappears once a month
- why giraffes have long necks
- why there is dew on the grass in the summer
- why dogs bark instead of chirp
- why penguins can't fly
- why trees grow vertically instead of horizontally
- why people have language and animals do not

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Writing Process

Brainstorm. Choose something you've wondered about, something that interests you, or something that you think might be enjoyable to write about to use as the basis for your own creation myth.

Create a setting, choose characters, and identify the problem. Remember the way in which the problem in your story is resolved should somehow influence the creation idea you are describing. You may plan your myth using a plot diagram.

Write the rough draft of your Creation Myth. Show it to me before you begin your final copy.

Peer review: Make sure your story moves clearly from beginning to end with no gaps in thought. Does the way the creation idea comes about make sense? (Remember: a myth can be magical or fantastic, but it still must make sense within the framework of your story.)

Revising: review your peer's comments and read your myth to someone out loud. Check your story for errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and word usage.

Write the final copy in ink. You may type it. Be sure to indent paragraphs and DO NOT skip lines between paragraphs. Turn in the prewriting, the rough draft, and the final copy.