



Myths and Legends

Oxford Level 14

Why the Sea is Salty

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

Synopsis

These three stories explain different aspects of the sea and rivers.

- *Why the Sea is Salty*: In this myth from Wales, a poor fisherman is given a mill that produces anything you wish for. His selfish brother wants vast quantities of salt to preserve fish and needs the mill to produce it.
- *Indra and Vritra*: In this myth from India, an angry dragon sucks up all the waterways of India in order to silence noisy humanity. Can the heroic god, Indra, save mankind?
- *Sedna*: In this Arctic myth, a fisherman's daughter is tricked into marrying a giant raven. In her attempt to escape, she is lost at sea. Soon there are no more fish to be caught. What is the connection?

Background information

- Most cultures seem to have creation myths about the sea or rivers. They focus on the aspects of water most important to their lives, such as; preserving food, irrigation and fish for eating.
- As with other myths, we do not know whether the original tellers believed such explanations; it may be that they simply enjoyed them, as we do.
- Maldwyn's food mill has echoes in many other stories, such as the traditional tale of *The Magic Porridge Pot*.
- The battle between Indra and Vritra does not go so well in all versions. In some, Indra is swallowed by the dragon and rescued by other gods.
- In some versions of the Sedna myth, she is not an innocent victim, but is thrown into the sea as a punishment for greed, or for rejecting all her suitors.

Group or guided reading

Introducing the book

- *(Predicting)* Look at the front cover together and ask children to predict the subject matter of the stories.
- *(Questioning)* Read the letter from the author together. Have the children come across any other explanatory or creation myths? Are we meant to believe these explanations?
- *(Predicting, Questioning)* Ask the children to read the contents page and have a go at predicting the country of origin for each story.
- *(Deducing)* How might the author have decided which story was to become the main title for the collection?



Myths and Legends

Strategy check

- Remind the children to use sound blending, words-within-words and sentence and story context to make sense of unfamiliar words. Some of the names may be hard to read, but this should not spoil the stories. Use the pronunciation guides (footnotes) and model their use if necessary.
- Check the children's decoding of 'persuade' on page 14.

During reading

- (*Summarising, Deducing*) Ask the children to read up to page 14, and form opinions of the characters of Glyn and Maldwyn.
- As children read independently, listen to each of them in turn, noting and prompting decoding strategies.

Independent reading

Objective: Deduce characters' reasons for behaviour from their actions. Infer writers' perspectives from what is written and implied.

(*Deducing, Clarifying, Predicting*)

- Once the children have read up to page 14, ask them to pair up and discuss their opinions of the brothers.
- As a group, discuss the brothers. Why might Glyn be so mean? Why doesn't Maldwyn use the mill to become rich?
- Ask the children to predict how Glyn borrowing the mill will lead to the sea becoming salty.
- On pages 8–10, how does the author create a creepy atmosphere?

Assessment: Check that the children:

- understand Maldwyn's goodness and Glyn's self-centred greed.
- can make appropriate predictions about the outcome of the story.
- can identify language choices that create atmosphere.

Returning and responding to the text

Objective: Identify and summarise evidence from a text. Use evidence from across a text to explain events or ideas.

(*Deducing, Clarifying, Summarising*)

- When the children have read to the end of the first story, check their understanding of Glyn's need for salt. Why does this show his greed? Does it also demonstrate stupidity?
- On page 19, why might the author have chosen the word 'comfortably' to describe how Maldwyn lives?
- Once the children have read all three myths, ask them to list what the stories have in common (e.g. struggle between two characters; cruelty; hunger/thirst).
- Which characters in the three myths show greed, and what are the outcomes?

Assessment: Check that the children:

- understand Glyn's need for salt, and his error in not using the mill to produce fish.
- identify careful word choices to emphasise character.
- can identify greedy behaviour and its eventual punishment.



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Speaking and listening activities

Objective: Create roles showing how behaviour can be interpreted from different viewpoints. Reflect on how working in role helps to explore complex issues.

- Hotseat a child as Maldwyn and put him on trial for not warning his brother and for taking advantage of his disappearance.
- Ask children to work in pairs to improvise the discussion between Sedna and her father on page 54.

Assessment:

- Can the children sustain roles to explore ideas and issues?

Writing activities

Objective: Summarise and shape material and ideas to write convincing non-narrative texts. Adapt non-narrative forms and styles to write texts.

- Ask the children to compose journalistic reports under the headline, 'Fish Return – Lonely Sea Goddess Blamed', or similar.

Assessment:

- Can the children produce news reports appropriate to the task, reader and purpose?

Objective: Choose and combine words and images for particular effects. Reflect critically on their writing and improve it.

- Ask the children to rewrite the battle between Indra and Vritra from the viewpoint of another dragon, sympathetic with Vritra's desire to get some peace.
- Encourage the children to add illustrations to their work and to reread it and improve on it where necessary.

Assessment:

- Can the children apply appropriate word choices to convey a scene?

Cross-curricular links

Art and Design

- Create depictions of the battle between Indra and Vritra, either in full colour pictures or with modelling clay.

Geography/ICT

- Use the internet and other sources to research the real reasons for a) droughts and floods, and b) the saltiness of the sea.

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Why the Sea is Salty (Oxford Level 14) curriculum coverage chart

Links to Oxford Reading Criterion Scale:

Reading

- Can read confidently and independently using a range of strategies appropriately, including decoding, to establish meaning, e.g. self-correcting, widening knowledge of vocabulary. (READ) [ORCS Standard 5, 2]
- Can identify the ways in which paragraphs are linked, e.g. use of connecting adverbs or pronouns for character continuity. (A) [ORCS Standard 5, 11]
- Can work out the meanings of ambitious words and/or phrases in context. (D) [ORCS Standard 5, 13]
- Can identify the effects of different words and phrases to create different images and atmosphere, e.g. powerful verbs, descriptive adjectives and adverbs. (E) [ORCS Standard 5, 17]
- Is beginning to recognize how a character is presented in different ways and respond to this with reference to the text. (D) [ORCS Standard 5, 22]
- Can sometimes explain different characters' points of view. (D) [ORCS Standard 5, 23]

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, Summarising, Deducing*

ENGLAND The National Curriculum in England: Years 3–4

Spoken language	Pupils should be taught to participate in discussions, presentations, performances and debates (SpokLang.9) Pupils should be taught to consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others (SpokLang.11)
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 main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph and summarising these (Y3/4 ReadComp.2v)
Writing: Composition	Pupils should be taught to draft and write by in narratives, creating settings, characters and plot (Y3/4 WritComp.2iii) Pupils should be taught to draft and write by in non-narrative material, using simple organisational devices such as heading and sub-headings (Y3/4 WritComp.2iv)

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

Listening and talking	When I engage with others, I can respond in ways appropriate to my role, show that I value others' contributions and use these to build on thinking (LIT 2-02a)
Reading	To show my understanding across different areas of learning, I can identify and consider the purpose and main ideas of a text and use supporting detail (LIT 2-16a) To show my understanding, I can respond to literal, inferential and evaluative questions and other close reading tasks and can create different kinds of questions of my own (ENG 2-17a)
Writing	By considering the type of text I am creating, I can select ideas and relevant information, organise these in an appropriate way for my purpose [...] (LIT 2-26a) I am learning to use language and style in a way which engages and/or influences my reader (ENG 2-27a)

WALES Programme of Study for English: Year 4

Oracy	Learners are able to explore different situations through role play (Y4_OracSpea.6) Learners are able to respond, giving views on what the speaker has said (Y4_OracList.2)
Reading	Learners are able to accurately identify the main points and supporting information in texts (Y4_ReadComp.1) Learners are able to deduce connections between information, e.g. sequence, importance (Y4_ReadComp.2)
Writing	Learners are able to adapt what they write to the purpose and reader, choosing words appropriately (Y4_WritMean.1) Learners are able to use specific structures in writing (Y4_WritStru.1)

NORTHERN IRELAND Levels of Progression in Communication across the curriculum: Primary Level 3

Talking and listening	Pupils can maintain a role (L3_com_talk.1ii) Pupils can make contributions which show understanding (L3_com_talk.2i)
Reading	Pupils can recognise, understand and sequence main points (L3_com_read.1i) Pupils can make deductions using information from the text (L3_com_read.4ii)
Writing	Pupils can structure and sequence their writing (L3_com_writ.2ii) Pupils can provide supporting detail using an expanding vocabulary (L3_com_writ.2iii)