



Myths and Legends

📖 Oxford Level 17

Shapeshifters

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

Synopsis

This is a collection of seven stories in which things are not always as they seem.

- *The Flowering Tree*: This folk tale from Southern India, tells the story of two sisters wanting to earn enough to buy their mother a present, the poor sisters use magic to produce heavenly flowers that attract royalty.
- *Eglé*: In this folk tale from Lithuania over-protective brothers seek to save their sister from the Snake King, even after she is happily married to him.
- *The Demon Fox*: This folk tale from Korea tells the story of how a farmer's cattle start dying mysteriously when his longed-for daughter turns six, but neither he nor his wife will see the gruesome truth.
- *The Leopard and Her Cubs*: This legend from Africa tells of how when the greatest hunter steals two leopard cubs, he proves no match for their shapeshifting mother.
- *Kishore's Guardian Angel*: In this legend from India, a black cat proves to be lucky for a young man whose child bride seeks to kill him.
- *The Selkie*: In this folk tale from Scotland, a woman knows that her selkie husband, and their son, must leave her for the sea, but she longs for their return.
- *The Golden Apples*: This folk tale from Slovenia tells of how after the entire royal household is turned to stone, three brothers begin a quest for a cure, hoping for reward and marriage.

Background information

- Shapeshifters and shapeshifting are found in narratives around the world, providing opportunities for reward, punishment and magical adventure.
- Marriage to a shapeshifter is associated with deceit, and so often ends badly.
- Female shapeshifters are often vicious.

Group or guided reading

Introducing the book

- *(Predicting, Questioning)* Look at the front cover together and ask the children what shapeshifters they have encountered in books or films. Why is shapeshifting such a useful narrative device?
- *(Questioning)* Read the blurb on the back of the book together. What animals and plants do you think the characters in these stories might change in to?
- *(Clarifying)* Tell the children that shapeshifting occurs for different reasons in this collection, and that they should think about the motives behind each transition.

Strategy check

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



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- Check the children's comprehension of 'quench' on page 6, 'chorused' on page 7, 'garlands' on page 13 and 'botanists' on page 16.

During reading

- (*Summarising, Deducing*) Ask the children to read The Flowering Tree and to think about the use of shapeshifting in this story.
- As the children read independently, listen to each of them in turn, noting and prompting decoding strategies.

Independent reading

Objective: Understand underlying themes, causes and points of view.

(*Deducing, Clarifying, Predicting*)

- Once the children have read The Flowering Tree, ask them to pair up to share their reactions to the shapeshifting.
- As a group, discuss how Munni transforms into a tree. Is this what they were expecting in a shapeshifter story?
- How does the author reveal the nature of the sisters before they learn their magic?
- In this rags-to-riches tale, what is the specific action that leads to reward?
- Ask the children for their thoughts on an appropriate punishment for the jealous Princess.

Assessment: Check that the children:

- identify the kind-hearted actions as indicative of character.
- understand that everything follows from Munni's gift of her ribbon.
- can design a genre-appropriate punishment.

Returning and responding to the text

Objective: Understand underlying themes, causes and points of view.

(*Deducing, Clarifying, Summarising*)

- When the children have read Eglé and The Demon Fox, ask them about the role of jealousy and family relationships in these and The Flowering Tree. What are the similarities?
- When the children have read The Leopard and Her Cubs and Kishore's Guardian Angel, ask them to identify similarities between these two very different tales.
- Why might it be said that The Selkie was always going to end in tragedy?
- In The Golden Apples, who is/are the shapeshifter/s?
- Once the children have read the whole collection, ask them to try to categorise the stories as 'reward' or 'punishment' stories.

Assessment: Check that the children:

- can identify themes of family resentment.
- can see similarities in the use of beautiful felines.
- identify the tragedy inherent in marrying a selkie, and then a fisherman.
- understand that the shapeshifters in The Golden Apples are those who are turned to stone.
- identify the traditional story themes.



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Speaking and listening activities

Objective: Improvise using a range of drama strategies and conventions to explore themes.

- Ask groups of three to create freeze-frames for the meal given by Yoora to her brothers on their return. Use mini-whiteboards to suggest speech and thought bubbles.
- Ask pairs to improvise an imagined meeting and discussion between Eglé and Ellen (from *The Selkie*), or between Seung (from *The Demon Fox*) and Mukunda (from *The Leopard and Her Cubs*).

Assessment:

- Create and sustain roles, adapting techniques to explore texts?

Writing activities

Objective: Establish, balance and maintain viewpoints.

- Ask the children to write short diary entries, in role, for any of the characters who witness a transformation.

Assessment:

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

Cross-curricular links

Art and Design

- Choose any of the transformations and represent, in 2- or 3-dimensions, the halfway point between human and animal/tree/statue.

Music

- Find the music and lyrics to the traditional Orkney song about the Selkie, and perform it.

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Shapeshifters (Oxford Level 17) curriculum coverage chart

Links to Oxford Reading Criterion Scale:

Reading

- Can read aloud with pace, fluency and expression, taking into account a wide range of presentational devices and punctuation. (READ) [ORCS Standard 6, 1]
- Can identify some features of different fiction genres, e.g. science fiction, adventure, mystery etc. (A) [ORCS Standard 6, 7]
- Can use inference and deduction skills to discuss messages, moods, feelings and attitudes using the clues from the text. (D) [ORCS Standard 6, 8]
- Can read between the lines, using clues from action, dialogue and description to interpret meaning and explain how and why characters are acting, thinking or feeling. (D) [ORCS Standard 6, 18]
- Can compare and discuss different texts to discover how they are similar and how they differ in terms of character, setting, plot, structure and themes. (E/A) [ORCS Standard 6, 20]

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 5–6

Spoken language	Pupils should be taught to use spoken language to develop understanding through speculating, hypothesising, imagining and exploring ideas (SpokLang.7) Pupils should be taught to participate in discussions, presentations, performances and debates (SpokLang.9)
Reading: Comprehension	Pupils should be taught to maintain positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by identifying and discussing themes (Y5/6 ReadComp.1v) Pupils should be taught to understand what they read by drawing inferences (Y5/6 ReadComp.2iii)
Writing: Composition	Pupils should be taught to draft and write by using further organisational and presentational devices to structure text and to guide the reader (Y5/6 WritComp.1i)

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) I can select ideas and relevant information, organise these in an appropriate way for my purpose and use suitable vocabulary for my audience (LIT 2-06a)
Reading	To show my understanding, I can respond to literal, inferential and evaluative questions [...] (ENG 2-17a) I can recognise the relevance of the writer's theme [...] (ENG 2-19a)
Writing	By considering the type of text I am creating, I can select ideas and [...] organise these in an appropriate way for my purpose (LIT 2-26a)

WALES Programme of Study for English: Year 5

Oracy	Learners are able to explore issues and themes through role play (Y5_OracSpea.5)
Reading	Learners are able to show understanding of main ideas and significant details in texts, e.g. mindmapping showing hierarchy of ideas, flowchart identifying a process (Y5_ReadComp.1) Learners are able to infer meaning which is not explicitly stated, e.g. what happens next?, why did he/she do that? (Y5_ReadComp.2)
Writing	Learners are able to use images, graphs and illustrations which are clear, relevant and appropriate (Y5_WritStru.4)

NORTHERN IRELAND Levels of Progression in Communication across the curriculum: Primary Level 4

Talking and listening	Pupils can develop a role (L4_com_talk.1ii)
Reading	Pupils can recognise main features and understand how these are linked to form and purpose (L4_com_read.4i) Pupils can understand explicit meanings and recognise some implicit meanings (L4_com_read.4ii)
Writing	Pupils can structure writing (L4_com_writ.2ii) Pupils can use a range of forms, as appropriate (L4_com_writ.3)