



by Frances Durkin

written by
FRANCES DURKIN

illustrated by
NUR VENTURA

MYTHS AND LEGENDS

THE HEROES, GODS and MONSTERS
who SHAPED OUR HISTORY

with 11
ACTIVITIES
YOU CAN TRY
TOO!

b small

Created by Frances Durkin



Key Info

Suitable for: Ages 7+



Read about the myths and legends:

This book is all about the stories that connect us and how we use them to make sense of the world around us. By travelling back in time and visiting different places around the world, we can see how our ancestors explained why the moon travels around the Earth or why there are different seasons. Each page allows lots of possible discussion points about each myth or legend, including:

- Where in the world does that story come from?
- When was it first told? And what else was happening in the world at that time?
- What does that story tell us about the people who first told it?
- Does the story teach us about anything in particular?
- Why do you think the story became important enough to be shared?
- And why has it lasted for such a long time?

Try the step-by-step activities:

The book also has a section of activities which relate directly to twelve of the stories featured. These projects enable students to engage with the book in a practical way. For example, after learning about the Ancient Egyptian god, Anubis, students can mummify a piece of fruit to learn the science behind mummification. Or, having read about the Ancient Greek goddess, Demeter, they can experiment with using seasonal produce and reducing food waste.

Explore the context:

The book can also be used to explore a broader view of myths and legends by asking students if they already know any of these stories.

- If they do know them, where did they hear them before?
- Was the story in the book the same as the one they know?
- Why do they think a story might change?
- Do they know stories which are similar but have different characters or come from different places?
- And what about the stories that are new to them; why do they think they haven't heard them before?
- Do those new stories teach them something they didn't know already?
- Why do they think it's important to keep sharing these stories?

Subjects: Art English Geography History Science

Who made the books?

Frances Durkin

Frances Durkin is a historian (PhD) and writer who grew up in a large, history-loving family. A regular contributor to Aquila magazine on all sorts of historical and STEM subjects for children and co-creator of the Histronauts, Frances runs workshops at museums and bookshops and has written for the Tate. Frances lives in Buckinghamshire, UK, with her young family.

Nur Ventura

Nur is an illustrator from Barcelona. Since the beginning of her career, she has been interested in telling stories with women as protagonists, as well as exploring themes of science and nature. Humor is fundamental in her work, and she believes it is a powerful tool to help children learn. She currently lives near Barcelona with her wife, son, and a grumpy cat, while dreaming of moving to a small house in the countryside and having her own garden.

Contents



ACTIVITY 1: THE MANY STORIES OF MAUI (see pages 12-13 of the book)

Objectives: Recognise that stories about the same person can differ between cultures.
Enhance critical literacy skills by comparing different retellings.

ACTIVITY 2: MAKE YOUR OWN CUNEIFORM TABLET (see pages 8-9 of the book)

Objectives: Recognise that other countries and cultures have different writing systems, and understand that the way information was recorded and passed on in the past has an impact on how the stories are remembered.

ACTIVITY 3: FOSSIL FOLKLORE (relevant to whole book)

Objectives: Recognise that science has helped us understand the history of our planet in a way that previous civilisations weren't able to. Discuss how this impacts the stories that are told.

ACTIVITY 4: THE VALUE OF A HERO (see pages 42-43 of the book)

Objectives: Recognise that governments and official institutions can use stories to create a national identity.

ACTIVITY 5: UNMAKE A MONSTER (see pages 38-39 of the book)

Objectives: Recognise that scary-sounding creatures play an important role in nature.

ACTIVITY 6: WHAT'S YOUR FOLKLORE?

Objectives: Carry out independent research into a topic that is personal to each young reader.



Activity 1: Māui



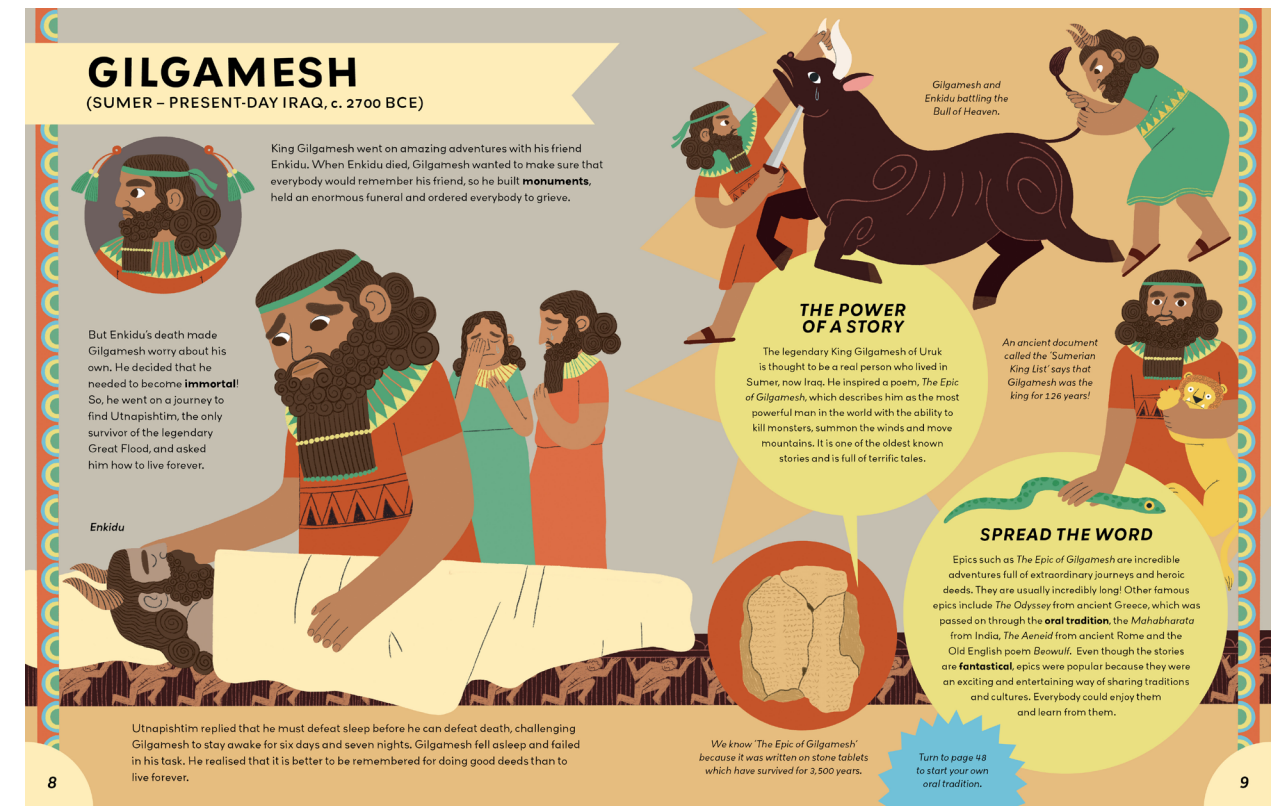
The Many Stories of Māui

Myths and Legends tells the story of how the demigod Māui tricked the goddess Mahuika into giving mortal people the power to make fire. This story is a part of the culture of the Māori people who live on the Polynesian island of Aotearoa (New Zealand). Māui is an important figure in Polynesian culture but his story changes in different places.

In Hawaii, the story goes that only the Alae 'Ula bird knew the secret to making fire. Māui asked the bird to share that secret and it said that he should rub sticks together to release the fire. But the bird lied and told Māui the wrong kind of sticks. When it didn't work Māui became very angry and threatened the bird until it told him that he should only use wood from the Olapua tree. Māui was very happy when these sticks worked, but he wanted to teach the bird a lesson so he held a fiery stick to its head and left a red burn mark. Today the descendants of the Alae 'Ula bird still have red marks on their foreheads.

- Polynesia is the name of a group of more than one thousand islands in the Pacific Ocean.
- The islands became inhabited by people who sailed there and made new homes and built new cultures.
- Can you find the Polynesian Islands on a map? How far apart are New Zealand and Hawaii?
- Which parts of the story are the same and which parts are different?
- How do you think each story connects with each island?

Activity 2: Gilgamesh



Make Your Own Cuneiform Tablets

Today we know the Mesopotamian stories of Gilgamesh because they were recorded in an ancient form of writing called cuneiform on pieces of clay which have survived for thousands of years. You can make your own clay tablet and cover it with markings that tell whatever story you like.

You will need:

- 250g plain flour (and a little more to stop the dough sticking to the surface)
- 125g table salt
- 125ml water
- wooden spoon
- bowl
- rolling pin
- baking tray
- baking parchment
- sticks and other things to make marks in the dough

Method:

1. Ask a grown-up to preheat your oven to its lowest setting.
2. Mix the flour and salt together in the bowl. Add the water and mix it all together to form a ball of dough.
3. Sprinkle flour over your work surface. Tip out the dough.
4. Divide the dough into a few pieces (the more pieces there are, the smaller the tablets will be).
5. Roll them out flat. Use your tools to make marks or decorations on the surface. Can you show a story on yours?
6. Place on a baking tray lined with parchment paper. Put in the oven and bake for three hours, or until they are hard.
7. Once they have cooled you can paint your tablets if you like.

Activity 3: Our Planet



Fossil Folklore

Myths and Legends shows that entire landscapes and the way the world turns have inspired incredible stories. But smaller objects are behind some very special folklore too.

Before we understood that dinosaurs walked the Earth millions of years ago and that their fossilised remains were our best clues to what they were and how they lived, those fossils puzzled the people who found them. But any puzzle can be explained with a good story.

In ancient Rome, strange triangular objects were believed to be meteorites that fell from the Moon, but in the Middle Ages those same triangles were thought to have been the tongues of snakes that were turned to stone by Saint Paul. These 'Tongue Stones' were believed to have magical healing properties. However, we now know that they were the fossilised teeth of an enormous shark called a Megalodon which became extinct 1.6 million years ago.

All over the world, the fossilised remains of small spiral shaped cephalopods called ammonites have been the root of fantastical stories. In England, it was said that Saint Hilda turned all of the snakes in Whitby to stone so that she could build her abbey and that's why there are so many ammonites there.

And it is now thought that the dragon bones described in ancient Chinese medical textbooks were actually the fossilised bones of dinosaurs.

Activity 4: Nanny of the Maroons



The Value of a Hero

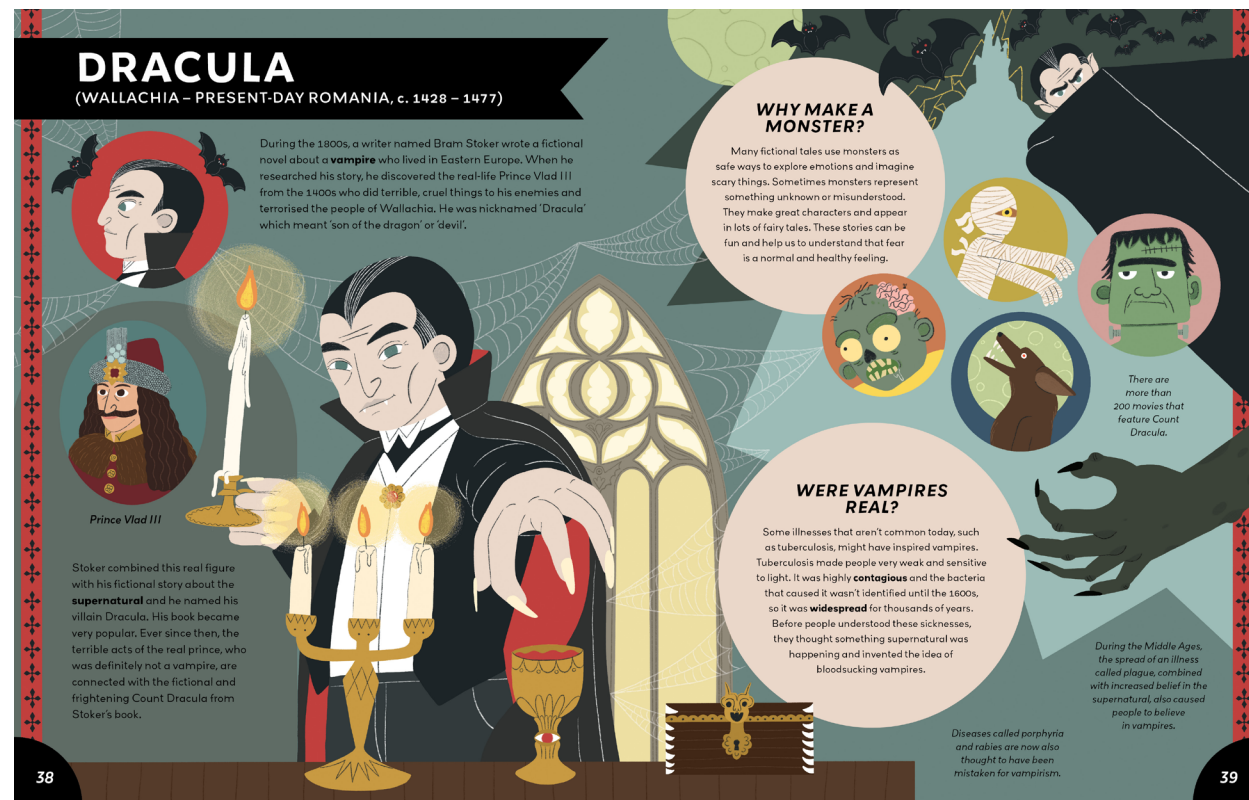
In the section about Jamaican folk hero and legend Nanny of the Maroons, you can see that she is so important to the people of Jamaica that there is a picture of her on the Jamaican \$500 bill. This is a wonderful way of keeping her memory alive and showing that she is a significant part of Jamaican culture.

Ask a grown up to show you a banknote from where you live.

- Does it have a picture of a person on it?
- Why do you think that person is there? Are they a leader or did they play a role in the society of that place?
- Can you research money from other countries? Do they have pictures of people on them too?
- If not, what do they have? Why do you think that is?
- If you were to choose a person whose face belonged on a banknote, who would you choose? And why?

Design your own banknote with your hero's face on it!

Activity 5: Dracula



Unmake a Monster

When Bram Stoker wrote his story about a vampire named Dracula, he didn't just connect his fictional character with the real Prince Vlad III of Wallachia. He also combined his knowledge of vampire bats from Central and South America to give Dracula the power to turn into a bat. But did he unfairly give all bats the reputation of being blood-sucking monsters?

- Can you research the positive roles that bats play in their ecosystems?
- What can you find out about vampire bats and where they live?
- Do you think it's fair that people don't like them?
- Which other animals have been made scary by fictional stories? For example, wolves in Aesop's *Fables* and fairy tales, spiders in *The Lord of the Rings*, sharks in *Jaws*, foxes in Beatrix Potter stories.
- Choose one of these animals and create a project that transforms them into the hero. What can you find out about the good things they do in real life and for their environments.

Activity 6: Over to You!



What's Your Folklore?

Folktales exist all over the world and there are probably some from near where you live. Maybe there's a hill where a giant sleeps, or an enormous black dog that prowls on stormy night, or even a place where fairies steal people away to dance in fairyland.

Can you research your local folklore and find out if there's a legend from near where you live? What does it tell you about your area? Is it connected to the local geography? Or maybe the beliefs of the people who once lived there. Write your own version of the story and think about how that legend would happen in the modern world.

