

MYTHS AND LEGENDS

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MYTHOLOGY



Primitive people had three ways of explaining their world: through observation of nature, practical experiences and imagination. Nature was often explained by bestowing everything with life and inventing gods and goddesses with powers far greater than those of people.

Mythology is part science, part religion and part social and moral law. Myths attempt to relate cause and effect, seek to explain the unknown and foster ethics and morality.

The best known of the myths are Greek, Roman and Norse. When the Romans conquered Greece, they adapted the religion of the Greeks to their own practical minds. They gave the gods and goddesses new names and believed in them with less ardor than did the Greeks.

The Norse gods and goddesses were not immortal and invincible as were the Greek gods and goddesses. To Norse gods, a heroic death was a victory and there was always a threat of impending doom.

Each culture manifests itself in its mythology. Comparative reading of myths develops an understanding of individual characteristics and a growing sense of the elements that are universal to the minds of people. Mythology does not belong in the past, but continues to work in our minds today. Science fiction writers of today often borrow from the ancient myths.

Stories from mythology draw upon the imagination of the reader and should be used to nourish the inborn sense of wonder in young readers which is often dulled by the practical aspects of life. Then, too, having had his or her imagination stirred, the student of mythology is encouraged to use mythological content as a basis for his or her own original writing. This is the purpose of *Myths and Legends . . .* to help the student to become a *consumer* of a unique and lasting form of literature, and to use that literature to become a *producer* of his or her own unique form of writing.