

Ten Characteristics of a Myth

1. A myth is a story that is, or was considered, a true explanation of the natural world and how it came to be.

2. Characters are often non-human and are typically gods, goddesses, supernatural beings or mystical “fist people.”

3. Setting is typically ancient, or prior to the time when actual records were kept. Myths are typically set in a world very similar to our own, but with supernatural monsters or areas.

4. The plot of a myth may take place between a supernatural world and our present day world. Myths do this to highlight the basic human behaviors that are essential in any setting.

5. Myths possess events that bend or break natural laws. This is often done to magnify the “super-naturalness” of the mythical world.

6. Promotes “Social Action”—myths try to tell people how to act and live. Core values such as individualism, family and community are often instilled in mythical heroes.

7. Myths have sense of mystery, or the unknown.

8. Dualities (or complete opposites such as night/day, good/evil) often play important roles in the plot of a myth.

9. Myths often have an emphasis on language... Mythical heroes are often sophisticated storytellers.

10. Myths are often metaphoric—that is, myths are created to comment or analyze a real world event. Real world questions that myths often attempt to answer are:

- Why are we here?
- Who are we?
- Why are we living? What is our purpose?

