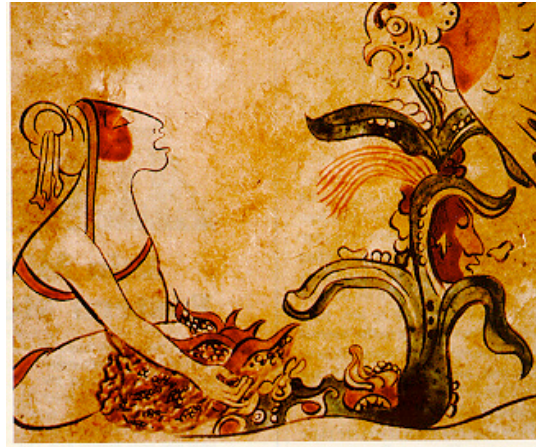


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MAYA MYTHOLOGY
The Hero Twins

The mythic hero is often aided on their quest by loyal friends or by gods or goddess benefactors.

Joseph Campbell



Popol Vuh Patricia Amlin 1989

Grade Level

Grade 3-6

Curriculum Area

Art • Language Arts

Overview

Myths and folktales are the world's oldest stories. People have told myths and folktales since language was created, keeping them alive and vital through the centuries by word of mouth. Myths and folktales are important in every world culture. A society without stories about its beginnings, its heroes, and its deepest values is like a person without a name, a family without roots. A myth is an anonymous, traditional story that explains a belief, a custom, or a mysterious natural phenomenon. The word *myth* comes from the Greek word *muthos*, which simply means "story." Myths had specific purposes in their cultures. In every culture, however, the main functions of myths were:

- To explain the creation of the world and the universe.
- To explain the human condition: how and why people were created, why they are flawed, why there is suffering in the world, why people must eventually die, and what happens to people after death.
- To explain natural phenomena, such as the setting of the sun and the phases of the moon.
- To explain the nature of gods and goddesses and how these deities and humans interact.
- To explain rituals, customs, and beliefs.
- To explain historical events.
- To teach moral lessons.

Tales of the hero and the heroic quest occur in nearly every world culture. If we look closely at the hero tales from all over the world and compare them, we find what the American mythologist Joseph Campbell called the *mono-myth* - literally, "the one story." This *mono-myth*, or archetypal heroic quest story, has remarkably the same structure from culture to culture, but is really the same hero underneath, facing the same kinds of challenges. Today, movie heroes Luke Skywalker and Indiana Jones serve as modern versions of the quest hero.

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Objectives

To infer the Mayan Cosmos (world view) from a creation myth.

To introduce to students that mythology and art perpetuate traditions and customs of a culture or ethnic group.

To introduce to students that art often utilizes symbols unique to the culture in which it was created, providing a way of communicating and preserving historical events in visual form.

To learn to use library resources, multimedia and the internet to develop research skills and to draw conclusion about Maya art and mythology.

To interpret information, make comparisons, create visual images, dramatize mythology, in order to reinforce newly acquired knowledge about the Mayans and their art.

Key Words

Hero

Definition-a person who is admired for bravery and courage.

Context-A society without stories about its beginnings, its heroes, and its deepest values is like a person without a name, a family without roots.

Myth

Definition-a story that tells about a belief of a particular group or people.

Context-A myth is an anonymous, traditional story that explains a belief, a custom, or a mysterious natural phenomenon.

Archetypal

Definition-condition of being famous.

Context-.This *mono-myth*, or archetypal heroic quest story, has remarkably the same structure from culture to culture, but is really the same hero underneath, facing the same kinds of challenges.

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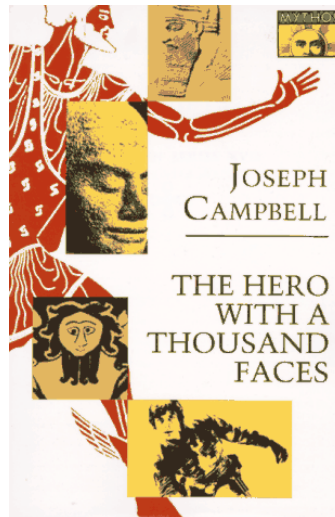
MAYA MYTHOLOGY

The Hero Twins

Activities

Activity

Read various versions of the Hero or Hero Twins from various cultures. They will compare them to their favorite super-heroes. Mythic heroes more often triumph over cosmic forces and bring about the regeneration of their society or their entire world. Write an essay about whether you prefer tales of superheroes or of ordinary people who have overcome great odds.



Activity

Have students read an origin myth of the Maya. Research websites on the Popol Vuh, the creation myth of the Maya. Read orally the *Popol Vuh of the Jaguar Priests* by Charles Barnett; compare with the translation of Dennis Tedlock, *Popol Vuh: The Definitive Edition of the Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life and the Glories of Gods and Kings*.

Activity

Research websites that show examples of Justin Kerrs rollouts as well as articles featured in books and magazines. Make a demonstration model of a rollout featuring the Hero Twins or the glyphs on the vases.

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MAYA MYTHOLOGY

The Hero Twins

Resources

- Hero of a Thousand Faces.* Joseph Campbell. New York, New York: Penguin Books. 1982.
- Mayan Tales from Zinacantan: Dreams and Stories From the People of the Bat.* Robert M. Laughlin. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press. 1996.
- MayaQuest Curriculum Guide: Mysteries of the Rainforest.* El Segundo, California: Classroom Connect. 1998.
- Painting the Maya Universe: Royal Ceramics of the Classic Period.* Dorie Reents-Budet. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press. 1994.
- Popol Vuh: A Sacred Book of the Maya.* Victor Montejo. Toronto, Canada: Greenwood Books. 1999.
- Popol Vuh of the Jaguar Priests.* Charles Barnett. Los Alamos, New Mexico: Exceptional Books, Ltd. 1993.
- Popol Vuh: The Creation Myth of the Maya.* Patricia Amlin. Berkeley, California: University of California-Berkeley. 1989. Video.
- Reading Mayan Images.* Linda Schele. Americas Magazine. Volume 39 Number 2. March/April 1987. Pages 38-43.
- The Bird Who Cleans the World and Other Mayan Tales.* Victor Montejo. Willimantic, Connecticut: Curbstone Press. 1991.
- The Blood of Kings: Highlights of the New Maya Image.* Marilyn Ingram. Fort Worth, Texas: Kimbell Art Museum. 1987.
- The Flayed God: The Mythology of Mesoamerica Sacred Texts and Images From Pre-Columbian Mexico and Central America.* Roberta H. Markman and Peter T. Markman. New York, New York: HarperCollins. 1992.
- The Hero Twins of Ancient Maya Myth: Rollout Photographs by Justin Kerr.* New York, New York: Kerr Associates. 1994.
- The Maya Vase Book.* Justin Kerr. New York, New York: Kerr Associates. 1998.
- Twins: The Bird of Darkness: A Hero Tale From the Caribbean.* Robert D. San Souci. New York, New York: Simon and Schuster. 2000.

Internet Links

Teachers

The Popol Vuh Browser

<http://www.leland.stanford.edu/class/anthro98a/Browser/homed.html>

Mayan Vases: Justin Kerr and Associates
<http://kawil.saiph.com.9500/dataSpark/maya>

Folklore and Mythology
<http://www.bart.nl/~micha/mystica.html>

Students

Popol Vuh of the Quiche Maya MayaQuest
<http://www.mecc.com/mayaquest.html>

Rabbit in the Moon
<http://www.halfmoon.org/>



The Hero Twins Rollout Justin Kerr
Kerr Associates 1998

Textbooks

- **World Literature**
Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.
- **MayaQuest Curriculum Guide**
Mysteries of the Rainforest
Classroom Connect
- **Painting the Maya Universe**
Royal Ceramics of the Classic
Period
Duke University Press



Hero Twins
Dumbarton Oaks Washington, D.C.

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MAYA MYTHOLOGY
The Hero Twins

Standards and Expectations

•*MPS Standards Level 3 English Language Arts A.3.3*

Read and discuss literary and nonliterary texts in order to understand human experiences.

•*MPS Expectations Level 3 English Language Arts A.3.3*

Distinguish fiction from nonfiction, realistic fiction from fantasy, fact from opinion, and biography from autobiography.

•*Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for Visual Arts*

Students will reflect upon the nature of art and meaning in art and culture.

•*Wisconsin's State Expectations for Visual Arts J.3.8*

Know that different cultures have different concepts of beauty.

•*MPS Standards Level 4 Language Arts B.4.1*

Create or produce writing to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

Assessment

Students will successfully show that they understand the creation myth of the Maya through dramas, demonstrations, models, and through discussions of the Popol Vuh made with modern heroes. Students may utilize video, drawings, paintings, multimedia and written formats.

Teachers will development rubrics to evaluate the thoroughness of research, and clarity of the comparisons.

