

Epic Tales

Chatterbooks activity pack



Epic Tales

About this pack

This month we have created a Chatterbooks pack filled with discussion questions and activities inspired by myths and legends, or by books that are modern retellings or include mythical creatures. Myths and legends are filled with excitement and adventure but they also have characters who can show children how to solve problems and succeed.

In this pack, you'll find some great suggestions for information and fact books for your groups to explore, read and enjoy, together with discussion questions and fun activities based on the stories. We hope you enjoy them, together with all the discussion and activity ideas, and further reading suggestions.

This pack is brought to you by **The Reading Agency** and their publisher partnership **Children's Reading Partners**.

The Reading Agency has run Chatterbooks, the UK's largest network of children's reading groups, since 2001. Reading for pleasure has more impact on children's success than education or social class; Chatterbooks groups, which are run in libraries and schools, help children develop a lifelong reading habit. Chatterbooks is a flexible model that can be used with children from 4 to 12, for all different abilities and in targeted or mixed groups. <http://readingagency.org.uk/chatterbooks/>

Find out more at: www.readinggroups.org/chatterbooks

You can buy Chatterbooks packs in The Reading Agency shop:
<https://shop.readingagency.org.uk/collections/children>

You can find hundreds of free resources for children on the Chatterbooks resources page:
<https://readingagency.org.uk/resources/?programme=chat>

The Reading Agency is a national charity that tackles life's big challenges through the proven power of reading. We work closely with partners to develop and deliver programmes for people of all ages and backgrounds. The Reading Agency is funded by Arts Council England. www.readingagency.org.uk

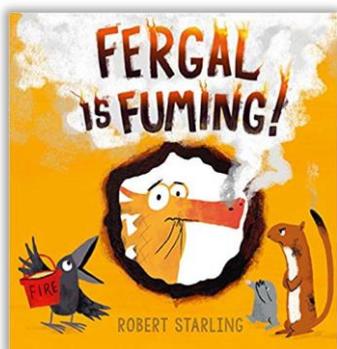
The Reading Agency's partnership programme brings publishers and literature prize coordinators into a closer relationship with libraries across the country to support delivery of author events, promotions and reading resources directly to readers.

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[Tips for your Chatterbooks session](#)

The books



Fergal is Fuming Robert Starling

Andersen Press 978-1783445905

A dragon with a short temper is not a good combination, as Fergal's family and friends soon find out. He burns the dinner (literally), reduces the football goal to ashes and absolutely cannot play a nice, quiet board game. It is only when he starts to notice other animals have clever tricks to calm down that Fergal begins to win back his friends, especially when he discovers dragons can cool off in a very handy way.

Robert Starling began doodling creatures and characters at school and hasn't stopped since. He lives and works in Bristol, and when he's not sketching up new characters or writing down stories he can be found sculpting, brewing coffee, adjusting his headphones or foraging in the kitchen for cake. Oh, and teaching kids. *Fergal is Fuming* is his first book.

Discussion

Fergal is a dragon. A dragon is a large, serpent-like legendary creature that appears in the folklore of many cultures around the world. Beliefs about dragons vary drastically, but dragons in western cultures are shown as winged, horned, four-legged, and capable of breathing fire. Dragons in eastern cultures are usually wingless, four-legged, snakelike creatures.

Below is an illustration of a dragon by Friedrich Justin Bertuch from 1806.

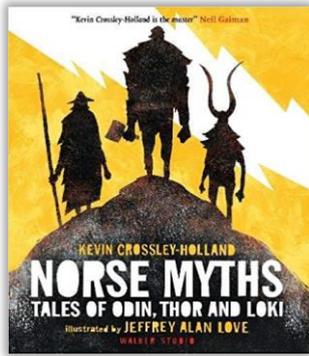


Now look at the cover of *Fergal is fuming*. What is similar and different about the two dragon illustrations?

Both illustrations show dragons breathing fire. What does fuming mean? Where do you get fumes? Why do you think *Fergal is fuming* (and breathing fire)? Why might Friedrich Justin Bertuch's dragon be breathing fire?

Activity

Give each child a piece of paper and a selection of colours. Ask the children to draw their own dragon creations. Ask them to draw the dragon breathing fire and to think of a reason why. Then do a table top gallery where the children share their creations and the story behind their dragons.



Norse Myths: Tales of Odin, Thor and Loki
Kevin Crossley-Holland, Jeffrey Alan Love

Walker Books
978-1406361841

The gods of the Vikings come to life as never before in this extraordinary illustrated anthology. These dramatic, enthralling and atmospheric tales are based on the Scandinavian myth cycle – one of the greatest and most culturally significant stories in the world – and tell of Odin with his one eye, Thor with his mighty hammer, and Loki, the red-haired, shape-shifting trickster. In this stunning illustrated anthology of myths, the strange world of ancient magic, giants, dwarfs and monsters is unforgettably imagined.

Kevin Crossley-Holland is a well-known poet and prize-winning author for children. His most recent books are a collection of poems, *The Breaking Hour*, and a brand-new retelling for children of the *Norse Myths: Tales of Odin, Thor and Loki*. He has lectured abroad on behalf of the British Council, regularly leads sessions for teachers and librarians, and visits primary and secondary schools. He offers creative writing workshops in poetry and prose and talks on the Anglo-Saxons and Vikings, King Arthur, heroines and heroes, and myth, legend and folk-tale.

Jeffrey Alan Love is an award-winning artist and writer. He is the author of *The Thousand Demon Tree* and *Notes From the Shadowed City*. Winner of the World Fantasy Award for Best Artist, the British Fantasy Award for Best Artist, a gold medal from the Society of Illustrators, a Silver Spectrum Fantastic Art Award, and two Academy of British Cover Design Awards, he has been nominated for the Kate Greenaway Medal, The British Science Fiction Award and the Chesley Award.

Discussion

In Norse culture, Odin with his one eye was known to be wise and inspirational, Thor with his mighty hammer was strong and powerful, and Loki was the red-haired, mischievous shape-shifting trickster.

From reading the stories in the anthology, do you agree with these descriptions?

What words would you use to describe Odin, Thor and Loki and why?

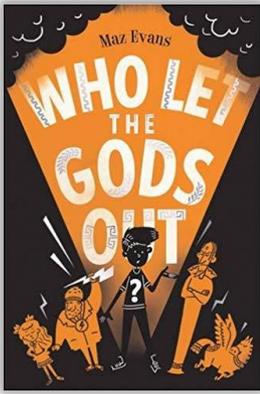
Who was your favourite character?

Activity

There is a wide selection of Vikings resources which can be used as part of your session available on [Girl Guiding Birmingham](#).

The Vikings had a written language. Nevertheless, for hundreds of years they rarely wrote stories down. Instead, they sang songs about their great battles and victories in war, and told stories about their gods and goddesses. After the Viking era, some of these story songs, called sagas, were written down so the stories could be preserved and saved. The Vikings wrote on stones and sticks. Their system of writing was called Runes.

Use the Runic alphabet on page 11 for the children to create their own secret messages which the rest of the group will try and decode.



Who Let The Gods Out?
Chicken House

Maz Evans
978-1910655412

Elliot's mum is ill and his home is under threat, but a shooting star crashes to earth and changes his life forever. The star is Virgo – a young Zodiac goddess on a mission. But the pair accidentally release Thanatos, a wicked death daemon imprisoned beneath Stonehenge, and must then turn to the old Olympian gods for help. After centuries of cushy retirement on earth, are Zeus and his crew up to the task of saving the world – and solving Elliot's problems too?

Maz Evans began her writing career in journalism as a TV critic and feature writer and has also been a university lecturer. Most recently she founded Story Stew; a creative writing programme that visits primary schools and literary festivals around the UK. This creative and inventive business is one that Maz is hugely passionate about, and was her personal answer to finding a creative outlet and role that fitted in around her family life. The *Who Let The Gods Out?* series grew from Maz's experiences with Story Stew and her daily interactions with young people: their connection to and creativity and spontaneity with storytelling. Maz has spoken to thousands of children and has never heard the same story twice.

Discussion

When the gods meet there is some confusion and there are some funny moments such as when Virgo watches television and says to Elliot: 'The little people who live in this box are incredibly rude.'

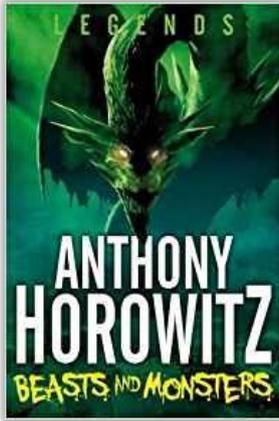
Think about what it would be like if Greek gods visited your house today. What would they find confusing? Are there any modern inventions, such as the internet or electricity, that the children can think of?

Activity

Who Let the Gods Out? features Pegasus (Zeus's winged talking horse), Cerberus (the three-headed dog), centaurs (partman, part horse), satyrs (part man, part goat) and even unicorns. These are all mythical creatures.

Your group can use a computer programme (such as Paint) or pens and paper to design and label their own mythological creature. Get the children to select between two and four animals that they are going to combine or adapt to create something new and unique. The children can also give their creatures a name.

To develop this idea further, the children can write a short story or comic strip about their creature and share with the group.



Beasts and Monsters
Macmillan Children's

Anthony Horowitz
978-0330510158

In the cold, dead eyes of the Banshee, and the hissing, spitting fangs of the Gorgon; in the fiery breath of the dragon and the razor-sharp claws of the Sphinx, there is a thirst for blood and a murderous hunger. But it is a time of heroes, and the teeth and claws of these hideous beasts are no match for the lethal blades of such men.

Anthony Horowitz is the author of the number one bestselling Alex Rider books and the Power of Five Series. He has enjoyed huge success as a writer for both children and adults. He was invited by the Ian Fleming estate to write the James Bond novel, *Trigger Mortis* and his most recent novel, *Maggie Murders* was a Sunday Times bestseller. Anthony also wrote the highly acclaimed Sherlock Holmes novels, *The House of Silk* and *Moriarty*. He has won numerous awards, including the Bookseller Association/Nielsen Author of the Year Award, the Children's Book of the Year Award at the British Book Awards, and the Red House Children's Book Award. In 2014 Anthony was awarded an OBE for Services to Literature.

Discussion

What did you like best about this book?

What did you like least about this book?

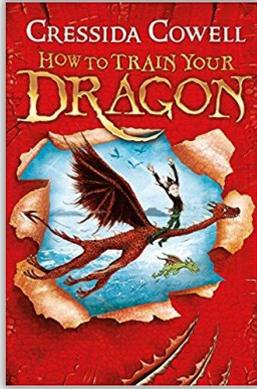
What other books did this remind you of?

Who would you recommend the book to and why?

Activity

In *Beasts and Monster* there are several characters inspired by Greek mythology such as Medusa and Gorgons. As a group, compile a list of all the characters in the novel, and divide them up between you. Create a profile for each character – using information from the book as well as from the Internet if appropriate. You will need to include a picture of the character, details of appearance, motivations and a brief backstory. You can then use these to create a display in your library.





How To Train Your Dragon

Hodder Children's Group

Cressida Cowell

978-0340999073

Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third is a smallish Viking with a longish name. Hiccup's father is chief of the Hairy Hooligan tribe which means Hiccup is the Hope and the Heir to the Hairy Hooligan throne - but most of the time Hiccup feels like a very ordinary boy, finding it hard to be a Hero.

In the first *How to Train Your Dragon* book Hiccup must lead ten novices in their initiation into the Hairy Hooligan Tribe. They have to train their dragons or be BANISHED from the tribe FOR EVER!

But what if Hiccup's dragon resembles an ickle brown bunny with wings? And has NO TEETH? The Seadragonus Giganticus Maximus is stirring and wants to devour every Viking on the Isle of Berk . . . Can Hiccup save the tribe - and become a Hero?

Cressida Cowell is the author and the illustrator of the bestselling *How to Train Your Dragon* book series. Her latest book *The Wizards of Once* is an international bestseller. Cressida is also the author of the Emily Brown picture books, illustrated by Neal Layton. Cressida is an ambassador for the National Literacy Trust and The Reading Agency and a founder patron of the Children's Media Foundation. She has won numerous prizes for her books, including the Gold Award in the Nestle Children's Book Prize, the Hay Festival Medal for Fiction, and Philosophy Now magazine's 2015 Award for Contributions in the Fight Against Stupidity.

Discussion

Did you notice any Viking mythological references in the book?

Some examples are outlined below:

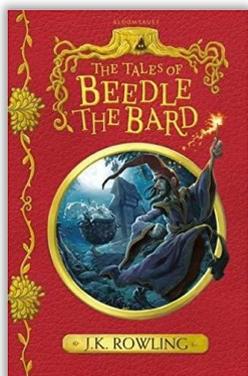
- Woden (pg. 12) – Also known as Odin or Oden, Woden is the chief of the Viking gods, much like Zeus was the king of the Greek gods. Woden is known as the god of wisdom
- Valhalla (pg. 12) – Woden's massive hall for specially-chosen warriors who died on Earth during battle. In Valhalla means "hall of the slain", and the dead warriors in Valhalla practice all day fighting each other in preparation for the battle at the end of the universe, where they all expect to finally die for good (but put up a valiant fight in the process)
- Loki (pg. 23) – he is a half-god/half-giant who causes lots of trouble for the Viking gods and is very untrustworthy. The mask in the film *The Mask* is said to be from Loki
- Thor (pg. 27) – the god of thunder and warriors, Thor is highly respected by Viking warriors, and he represents the best of Viking soldiers. He is known for his weapon, the hammer Mjöllnir, which, when thrown at its target, returns magically to its owner like a boomerang. Mjöllnir also has the power to shoot lightning bolts
- The four days of the week are named after Viking (Norse) gods. Tuesday is named after Tyr, the god of war, Wednesday is named after Woden, Thursday is named after Thor, and Friday is named after Frigga, the goddess of marriage (and Woden's wife)

Would you like to be the son or daughter of the chief, and thus the expected leader of your tribe? Why or why not?

Activity

Watch the film *How to Train Your Dragon* as a group and then compare the scenes outline below:

- Meeting Hiccup for the first time
- Meeting Toothless for the first time
- How Vikings treat the dragons
- The physical appearance of Gobber
- What size and type of Dragon is Toothless
- How the massive dragon is defeated



The Tales of Beedle the Bard

Bloomsbury

J.K. Rowling

978-1408883099

The Tales of Beedle the Bard have been favourite bedtime reading in wizarding households for centuries. Full of magic and trickery, these classic tales both entertain and instruct, and remain as captivating to young wizards today as they were when Beedle first put quill to parchment in the fifteenth century.

These gems are accompanied by explanatory notes by Professor Albus Dumbledore (included by kind permission of the Hogwarts Headmaster's archive). His illuminating thoughts reveal the stories to be much more than just simple moral

tales, and are sure to make Babbitty Rabbitty and the slug-belching Hopping Pot as familiar to Muggles as Snow White and Cinderella.

J.K. Rowling is the author of the record-breaking, multi-award-winning *Harry Potter* novels. Loved by fans around the world, the series has sold more than 500 million copies, been translated into 80 languages and made into eight blockbuster films. In 2012, J.K. Rowling's digital company and digital publisher Pottermore was launched, a place where fans can enjoy the latest news from across the wizarding world, features and original writing by J.K. Rowling. As well as receiving an OBE and Companion of Honour for services to children's literature, J.K. Rowling has received many awards and honours, including France's Légion d'Honneur and the Hans Christian Andersen Award.

Discussion

Get a large piece of paper. Get the group to think of all the keywords and images that come to mind when they hear the names J.K. Rowling, Harry Potter and Beedle the Bard.

Once your group have completed their mind maps have a discussion as a group e.g. **Did you think of similar things? Is there anything shown here that you would like to discuss?**

You could also discuss as a group what is different between J.K. Rowling's sheet and the two fictional characters.

Activity

The Tales of Beedle the Bard Word Search

Beedle the Bard

T	W	D	Y	T	T	I	B	B	A	B	A	A	E
S	A	O	W	A	N	D	P	R	I	A	B	T	R
T	R	Y	N	O	L	U	A	N	L	A	E	P	I
O	L	T	W	H	R	W	R	B	P	I	R	I	W
R	O	R	Y	O	G	N	I	T	M	A	G	I	C
Y	C	E	A	P	A	L	E	Z	O	A	T	F	L
T	K	L	D	P	N	A	T	A	A	T	A	D	O
E	O	A	W	I	I	O	T	D	D	R	A	B	D
L	A	T	M	N	A	A	R	M	P	T	D	G	B
L	A	A	I	G	T	E	T	D	T	T	R	K	A
E	Y	D	F	P	N	C	G	A	Y	E	W	O	E
R	L	G	T	O	U	Y	Y	R	T	B	A	F	W
A	A	T	O	T	O	Y	T	T	I	B	B	A	R
P	B	E	W	C	F	O	N	F	B	M	O	T	O

BARD
HOPPING POT
WIZARD
TALE
WAND
MAGIC
BABBITTY
WARLOCK
RABBITTY
FOUNTAIN
STORYTELLER

Play this puzzle online at : <https://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/502930/>

*answers on page 11

More Epic Tales activity ideas

Icebreaker activity: Myth or Legend?

Share the definition of a myth and a legend with the group.

Myth - A traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining a natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events e.g. Ancient Celtic myths, Greek myths.

Legend - A traditional story sometimes popularly regarded as historical but not authenticated, e.g. the legend of King Arthur.

*definitions from www.oxforddictionaries.com

You can then use the Myths and Legends Sorting Sheet on page 12 for the children to research and then into piles as either a myth or legend.

***Each of the stories has a hyperlink on the Chatterbooks resources page so that children can find out more about the stories if desired**

Who Am I?

On separate bits of paper write down a mythical or legendary creature or person – e.g. ‘Robin Hood’, ‘Loch Ness Monster’, ‘a faerie’, ‘a giant’ and each child has to hold these against their forehead (without looking).

Each person gets a chance to ask a question to help them guess what is written on their paper, but this can only have a yes or no answer.

You may want to demonstrate how the game works by having a go first and asking the group the questions.

Research and Write

Using books in the library and the Internet, ask the children to find myths and legends from a chosen country or region. They can then create a PowerPoint or write a report about what they have discovered.

Hero Job Application

Put a wanted poster up in your library with the following information.

*Hero needed to rid the city of Athens of the nine-headed snake monster called the Hydra!
Applicants must be able to fight and defeat a most evil monster which has super strength, poisonous venom
and the ability to re-grow its heads if they are chopped off.
Letters of application should be sent to King Aegeus of Athens stating why you are suitably qualified for the
job of ‘hero’.
Rewards will include money and fame.*

The children can then ‘hotseat’ for the opportunity by explaining why they would be the best person for the job. After everyone’s ‘pitch’ the group can select their hero.

Read Aloud

Get all of the group sat comfortably and preferably not at a table. Read aloud a myth or legend to the group. Let the children then pick their own choice or Epic Tale to share with the group.

Other Useful Websites

- [Primary Resources Myths and Legends](http://www.primaryresources.co.uk/english/englishC2.htm) [http://www.primaryresources.co.uk/english/englishC2.htm]
- [Myths and Legends story bank](http://myths.e2bn.org/mythsandlegends/) [http://myths.e2bn.org/mythsandlegends/]
- [Roman Myths and Legends for Kids](https://rome.mrdonn.org/myths.html) [https://rome.mrdonn.org/myths.html]
- [Britain Express Myths](https://www.britainexpress.com/Myths/myths-index.htm) [https://www.britainexpress.com/Myths/myths-index.htm]

Answers and supporting sheets

Word search answers

Beedle the Bard

T	W	D	Y	T	T	I	B	B	A	B	A	A	E
S	A	O	W	A	N	D	P	R	I	A	B	T	R
T	R	Y	N	O	L	U	A	N	L	A	E	P	I
O	L	T	W	H	R	W	R	B	P	I	R	I	W
R	O	R	Y	O	G	N	I	T	M	A	G	I	C
Y	C	E	A	P	A	L	E	Z	O	A	T	F	L
T	K	L	D	P	N	A	T	A	A	T	A	D	O
E	O	A	W	I	I	O	T	D	D	R	A	B	D
L	A	T	M	N	A	A	R	M	P	T	D	G	B
L	A	A	I	G	T	E	T	D	T	T	R	K	A
E	Y	D	F	P	N	C	G	A	Y	E	W	O	E
R	L	G	T	O	U	Y	Y	R	T	B	A	F	W
A	A	T	O	T	O	Y	T	T	I	B	B	A	R
P	B	E	W	C	F	O	N	F	B	M	O	T	O

BARD
 HOPPING POT
 WIZARD
 TALE
 WAND
 MAGIC
 BABBITTY
 WARLOCK
 RABBITTY
 FOUNTAIN
 STORYTELLER

The Runic Alphabet

THE VIKING ALPHABET



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Available on the TeachingIdeas Vikings page [<http://www.teachingideas.co.uk/vikings/the-viking-alphabet>]

Myths and Legends Sorting Sheet

<u>Trojan Horse</u>	<u>Robin Hood and The Golden Arrow</u>
<u>Pandora's Box</u>	<u>King Arthur and the Round Table</u>
<u>Thor and the Giants</u>	<u>The Loch Ness Monster</u>
<u>Perseus and Medusa</u>	<u>Saint George and the Dragon</u>
<u>Goddess Durga</u>	<u>Edmund of the East Angles</u>
<u>Leprechauns</u>	<u>Finn MacCool and the Giant's Causeway</u>
<u>Icarus and Daedalus</u>	<u>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</u>

*Please note that the myths are the left column and the legends are the right column.



Here are more books inspired by myths and legends

Author	Title	Publisher	ISBN
n/a	Illustrated Myths from Around the World	Usborne	978-1409596738
Steve Smallman, Elina Ellis	Itchy, Scritch, Scratchy Pants	Little Tiger Press	978-1848699410
Jenny Nimmo	Snow Spider	Egmont	978-1405281775
Michael Morpurgo	Magical Myths and Legends	Oxford University Press	978-0192767356
Elizabeth Lim	Reflection	Disney	978-1484781296
Jasmine Richards	Secrets of Valhalla	Harper Collins	978-0062010100
Rick Riordan	Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief	Puffin	978-0141346809
Janina Ramirez	Riddle of the Runes	Oxford University Press Children's Books	978-0192766335
Kieran Larwood	The Legend of Podkin One-Ear	Faber and Faber	978-0571340200
Ronnie Randall, Graham Howells	The Children's Book of Myths and Legends	Armadillo Books	978-1843228196