WHAT ARE THE MYTHS AND LEGENDS OF WALES?

SUPPORT MATERIALS

If you need further support on specific aspects of outdoor learning these materials can enhance the engaging experiences you are providing. They can support you as you design, plan and implement your curriculum. Outdoor learning is a great way to develop learners' integral skills (creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem-solving, personal effectiveness, planning and organising). You will want to focus on why learning matters and ensure you are meeting your learners' needs.
These materials show a path that could be taken through the activity. This is not meant to be prescriptive. You should adapt your approach depending on your learners' needs and interests and your local area.

OVERVIEW

Learners consider the words 'myth' and 'legend' and explore what they mean in different contexts. They explore a variety of Welsh myths and legends and begin to think about their own myth or legend, using the school grounds or local area to spark their imagination. Learners ask their families about long-held stories and how we use myths and legends. Then, they mind map ideas around mythical language, creatures, magical objects and heroes/heroines before creating a storyboard or cartoon strip to show their myth or legend.

CURRICULUM FOR WALES

Areas explored:

- Expressive arts
- Languages, Literacy and Communication

Activity also incorporates aspects of cross-curricular skills outlined in the LNF and DCF.

RESOURCES

Internet enabled device and internet access.
Means of recording sights and sounds, e.g. tablet, smart phone, paper and pencils, etc.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

- Many tasks require learners to work in pairs or groups.
- Encourage learners to share their ideas, and through open questioning, explain and justify their ideas when possible. Focus questions have been suggested to guide learners through the tasks.
- Some tasks might be more effective if pairs or groups of learners have access to an internet enabled device.
- When taking learners outdoors, it is essential that the Countryside Code is adhered to and any relevant risk assessments have been carried out with risks mitigated.

TASK 1

WHAT ARE MYTHS AND LEGENDS?

Explain to learners that you want them to explore what the words 'myth' and 'legend' mean to them and as a starting point you will ask them to consider each of the words.

Screen 3

Ask learners to consider the 'talking heads' to activate their prior knowledge and understanding. Invite pairs of learners to discuss the focus questions.

Focus questions

- Who do you agree with the most? Why?
- Who do you disagree with? Why?
- What do you think a myth is?

You could ask learners to share their ideas with the class.

Screen 4

Show learners the images as a stimulus and encourage them to write a definition of 'myth'.

Screen 5

Show learners the definitions of '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:
  - **'ancient Celtic myths' – 'the heroes of Greek myth'**
- a widely held but false belief or idea:
  - **'the belief that evening primrose oil helps to cure eczema is a myth, according to dermatologists'**
- a misrepresentation of the truth:
  - **'attacking the party's irresponsible myths about privatisation'**
- a fictitious or imaginary person or thing:
  - **'nobody had ever heard of Simon's mysterious friend—Anna said he was a myth'**

Invite pairs of learners to read the definitions and to discuss the questions posed.

Focus questions

- Which definition is similar to your definition?
- Which definition is different to your definition?
- How could you amend your definition to improve it?

Screen 6

Invite learners to discuss with a partner what they think a 'legend' is by considering the questions posed.

Focus questions

- What do you think a 'legend' is?
- Where have you heard the word 'legend'? What was it referring to?
- When have you used the word 'legend'? Why did you use it?
- What legends do you know about? How do you know about them?

Finally, ask learners to make a list of words they would use to describe what a legend is. Encourage them to use their ideas and some of the words from the list to write a definition of what a legend is.

Screen 7

Provide learners with different definitions of what a 'legend' is. Invite them to read the definition and to discuss the questions posed with a partner.

- a traditional story sometimes popularly regarded as historical but not authenticated:
  - **'the legend of King Arthur' or 'according to legend he banished all the snakes from Ireland'**

Focus questions

- How is this definition similar to yours?
- How is this definition different to yours?
- How could you amend your definition to improve it?

Screen 8

Invite learners to try the quiz to see if they know the differences between myths and legends.

TASK 2

THINKING OF WELSH MYTHS AND LEGENDS

In this task, learners are going to consider a variety of Welsh myths and legends. Explain to them that this is to help them produce their own myth or legend in the next task.

Screen 3

Ask learners to watch the video clip (about 3 and a half minutes) and to consider the questions posed.

Gwyllgi - Devil Dog of Darkness. Welsh Legends

Focus questions

- Is Gwyllgi a myth or a legend? Why?
- What other Welsh myths or legends have you heard of? When? How? What do you remember about them?

Screen 4

Provide learners with the example of a Welsh legend, Guto Nyth Brân, an 18th Century legendary runner. Invite learners to read about the legend and to discuss the questions posed.

Focus questions

- Is Guto Nyth Brân a myth or a legend? Why?
- How far could you run in 53 minutes? How do you know?

Screens 5-6

Take learners outside and ask them to measure how far they can run in a minute. Then, discuss the questions posed.

Focus questions

- How far did you run? How did you feel? Why?
- How far would you get in 53 minutes? How did you work it out? Why like that?
- How long would it take you to run 12 miles? Why do you think that?

Screen 7

Provide learners with the Welsh folk tale custom about the Mari Lwyd tradition – a white horse that appears in the darkest months of the Welsh year, bringing mischief and songs/verses to the door of the household. Invite learners to read about Mari Lwyd and to discuss the questions posed.

Focus questions

- Is Mari Lwyd a myth or a legend? Why?
- What verses or raps could you write to gain entry into somewhere and to scare someone away?

Ask learners to write verses or raps they could use to try and gain entry into a house or to use to ward off people trying to gain entry to their house. Encourage some learners to go outside and to take part in a 'rhyming battle' possibly as a rap whilst other learners remain inside school. Ensure all learners have the opportunity to be part of both the outside and the inside rhyming groups.

Screens 8-15

Explain to learners that they will develop a new myth or legend based on something they find outside. To help them think about this ask them to read the next seven screens giving details about some Welsh myths and legends.

- **Devil's bridge** - The Welsh landscape is so beautiful it attracts visitors from every corner of the globe, including, apparently, the underworld. Legend has it that in the 11th Century Satan himself visited Ceredigion to see what the fuss was about. While staying there he met a woman whose cow was stranded across a river. The Devil offered to build her a bridge to rescue the cow, in exchange for the soul of the first living thing that crossed it. After mulling it over she agreed. As soon as the bridge was built, she threw a loaf of bread across it, which her dog dutifully ran after.
- **Angelystor** - Angelystor is a menacing supernatural figure that allegedly appears in the village of Llangernyw. This happens every year under the churchyard's 3,000-year-old yew tree, once on Hallowe'en and again on 31st July. The spectre will announce, in Welsh, the names of the local people who will soon meet their end. According to folklore, a tailor named Shon ap Robert was very sceptical about this legend. He was challenged by villagers to prove their fears wrong. He went to the church on Hallowe'en and to his surprise, there was Angelystor, speaking Shon ap Robert's name, and he duly died later that year.
- **Taliesin** - Taliesin becomes the most famous bard in Britain, foretelling the death of the evil king Maelgwyn Gwynedd at the hands of a 'yellow beast'. Through his poetry he inspires the Celtic warriors of Britain in their struggle against the Saxon invaders. Towards the end of his life Taliesin makes a famous prophecy about the fate of the British, which has had tremendous significance in contemporary Wales:

  'Their Lord they shall praise,
  Their language they shall keep,
  Their land they shall lose -
  Except wild Wales.'
- **Cad Goddeu (The battle of the trees)** - A medieval poem that tells how a legendary enchanter called Gwydion uses his staff of enchantment to transform the trees of the forest to fight as his army in a war. The front line of the battle is led by the alder tree, found at river edges an early colonisers of woodland space.

  'Gwern blaen llin,
  A want gysseuin
  Helyc a cherdin
  Buant hwyr yr vydin.'

  'Alder, front of the line,
  formed the vanguard
  Willow and Rowan
  were late to the fray.'

- **Gelert the Dog** - In the thirteenth-century, Prince Llywelyn the Great had a palace at Beddgelert, and spent much of his time in the surrounding countryside hunting. One day when he summoned his hunting dogs, his favourite dog Gelert didn't appear, so Llywelyn had to go hunting without him.
  When Llywelyn returned from the hunt, he was greeted by Gelert who came bounding towards him - his jaws dripping with blood.
  A horrible thought crossed the prince's mind - was the blood on the dog's muzzle that of his one-year-old son? He looked in the nursery and there was an upturned cradle spattered with blood! He searched for his son but there was no sign of him.
  Llywelyn was convinced that Gelert had killed his son.
  Mad with grief he took his sword and plunged it into Gelert's heart.
  As the dog howled in agony, Llywelyn heard a child's cry coming from underneath the upturned cradle. It was his son, unharmed!
  Beside the child was an enormous dead wolf, killed by the brave Gelert.
  Llywelyn was struck with remorse and carried the body of his faithful dog outside the castle walls and buried him where everyone could see his grave.
- **Yr Afanc** - A large demonic lake beast, which took the form of a grotesque dwarf, giant beaver or crocodile.
  People who lived along the Conwy Valley were constantly plagued with terrible floods that drowned their livestock and ruined their crops. Everyone believed that Yr Afanc was to blame.
  Yr Afanc lived in Llyn-yr-Afanc in the River Conwy. It was a gigantic beast who, when annoyed, was strong enough to break the banks of the pool causing the floods. Many attempts had been made to kill him, but it seems that his hide was so tough that no spear, arrow or any man-made weapon could pierce it.
  The wise men of the valley held a meeting and decided that if force wouldn't work, then the Afanc must somehow be enticed out of his pool and removed to a lake far away, where he could cause no further trouble.
  A young maiden was brave enough to entice Yr Afanc out of the water so that the men could capture him and move him to the distant lake.
- **Y Cyhyraeth** - Similar to the Irish Banshee, Y Cyhyraeth is a seldom heard formless death spirit. She is said to groan and cry before a death, or multiple deaths caused by a disaster or epidemic, she also wails for the death of natives who have died away from their homeland. She often appears as quite ugly with long, black, knotted hair, black teeth, bone-thin arms and legs, a pallid complexion, and, in some cases, leather wings.

Screen 16

After reading the stories, ask learners to discuss the questions posed.

Focus questions

- Which stories are myths and which are legends? How do you know?
- Which is your favourite story? Why?
- Do any of the stories scare you? Which ones? Why?
- Which of the stories had you heard of before? When?

Screen 17

Before they go outside to find interesting features that spark their imagination, ask learners to think about:

- What types of things are you going to look for? Why?
- What do you need to take outside to record information about the interesting features?

Screen 18

Invite learners to go outside (in the school grounds or local area) and find interesting features that spark their imagination. The idea is for learners to identify, for example, a stone, tree, mound, carving, etc. within the school grounds that could be used as a basis for developing a simple myth or legend. Invite them to choose one of these interesting features to use as a basis to create a myth or legend.

Screen 19

Once back inside, ask learners to discuss the questions posed and jot down their ideas to use later.

Focus questions

- What interesting features did you find in the school grounds?
- Why did these interesting features spark your imagination?
- Which interesting feature did you choose? Why?
- What ideas do you have about a myth or legend you could create about this feature?

TASK 3

HOW DO WE USE MYTHS AND LEGENDS?

Explain to learners that we are going to look at myths and legends from their families' viewpoint and consider why we have them and how they have inspired others.

Screen 3

Engage learners with the notion that we all tell stories. We tell them about things that happened in school or at work, at home, on holiday and when we are out with friends. Invite learners to discuss the questions posed.

Focus questions

- What is your favourite story to tell?
- Why do you tell this story?
- Do people find it entertaining? Why?
- Who would you tell this story to? When?
- Is there a lesson to be learned in this story? What is it?

You could ask learners to tell their stories to the class.

Screen 4

Explain to learners that they have probably heard people in their family tell stories about things that have happened in the past and that these stories might have started with words such as:

- I remember once...
- There was this one time...
- I'll tell you a funny story about your...

Invite learners to ask each of their family members to tell them a story and to explain why they like the story and why they tell it. Then, to choose their favourite and be ready to share it back in school.

Screen 5

Ask learners to discuss the questions posed.

Focus questions

- What stories did you hear? Which was your favourite? Why?
- Who were the stories about?
- Why do you think your family tell stories such as this?
- Do you think any of the stories you heard are myths or legends? Why do you think that?

Screen 6

This screen provides learners with information that explains the reasons that myths and legends exist.

Myths and legends exist to...

- Explain the world and human experience.
- Answer timeless questions and try to give direction to each generation.
- Give people hope that by living a virtuous life, they can earn a better life in the hereafter.
- Create a cultural tradition.
- Give life warnings to future generations, usually transformed into monstrous or supernatural beings, or magical or unlikely situations.

You could go through this with learners and discuss each bullet and gather their thoughts. Remind learners of the family or personal story they shared and ask them to consider which of the bullets is the closest fit to their story and to explain why they think that.

Screen 7

Inform learners that Welsh mythology has been a source of inspiration for many artists, writers, and filmmakers. The stories and legends of Welsh mythology have been adapted into various forms of art, including literature, music, and visual arts.

Explain to learners that the Mabinogion, a collection of Welsh tales, has been a particularly rich source of inspiration for artists. The stories of the Mabinogion have been adapted into plays, operas, and films, and have inspired many writers. Conclude that Welsh mythology has been a rich source of inspiration for artists across various mediums. The stories and legends of Welsh mythology continue to inspire new works of art and will likely continue to do so for years to come.

TASK 4

HOW CAN WE CREATE OUR OWN MYTHS OR LEGENDS?

Explain to learners that they are going to consider different ideas and elements they could include in their own myth or legend. Throughout the task, they will be asked to mind map their ideas and use these notes to develop a storyboard or cartoon strip of the story.

Screen 3

Explain to learners that they are now going to link what they found in Task 2 outside that sparked their imagination and start a mind map to show any inspiration they gained from this.

Screen 4

Invite learners to read the text about JRR Tolkien and how he used Wales and Welsh place names for inspiration.

Screen 5

Ask learners to use the map to look at the local area and make a list of any Welsh street or place names they see. They could add any other Welsh words or terms that they find interesting. Then, to use their list of words to create the names of characters and places they might use when they write their myth or legend. Ask them to add these to their mind map.

Screen 6

Invite learners to consider what magical objects they might include in their story by considering the questions posed.

Focus questions

- What magical objects do you usually have in myths and legends?
- What magical object will you use for your story? Why?
- How will your hero find the magical object? What clues will they have to solve? How will they do this?
- What will your hero have to do to get the magical object?

Then, to jot down ideas on their mind map.

Screen 7

Encourage learners to think about the creature they could use in their story. Ask them to consider the questions posed.

Focus questions

- What mythical or legendary creatures do you know about? Which is your favourite? Why?
- Where will your creature live? Why?
- How will it make use of this place? Why?
- How could you use features such as clouds and trees to help your story?
- What will your creature look like? Why?
- What features will your creature have? Why?
- What special powers will it have? How will it use these powers? Why?
- What will your creature be called? Why?

Then, to jot down ideas on their mind map and draw their creature.

Screen 8

Invite learners to think about their heroes by considering the questions posed.

Focus questions

- Who or what will be the hero of your story?
- Will they have superpowers? If so, what will their superpowers be? Why?
- How will these superpowers help them to battle your creature?
- How will your hero outwit your creature?

Then, to jot down ideas on their mind map.

Screen 9

Just before they start to produce their story, ask learners to plan using their mind map and drawing. Remind them to ensure they have thought about:

- an exciting opening
- places, people or events
- a problem to be solved
- a plot that shows how the problem was solved
- an ending that shows what happens to the main characters.

Now they can create a storyboard or a cartoon strip to show their story. They could do this on paper or digitally.