The structure of myths

Myths are stories about gods and goddesses. Many have a religious message. Some have a message about what happens because of people’s wishes or actions. Many myths are about amazing events and characters, animals and objects that have magical powers.

The Midas Touch

Midas was king of Phrygia. One day his farmhands brought him a creature who was part-man and part-goat. They had found him sleeping in the vineyard and tied him up to stop him escaping. Midas immediately recognised the creature as Silenus, who was the right-hand man to the god Dionysus. He quickly ordered that he be set free.

Silenus explained that he and his master had just returned from the East where they had been discussing the cultivation of the grape. Dionysus had brought back a tiger or two and an ever-expanding flock of followers, as well as a very tired Silenus. Silenus had slept in Midas’s vineyard to recover from the trip. Now he (and Dionysus) were grateful to the king for treating him well. The god was so pleased, in fact, that he offered to grant whatever Midas should wish for.

Midas didn’t have to think twice; he believed that he would be happy if he could continually restock the gold in his royal treasury, so he asked that everything he touch be turned to gold. Dionysus paused, checked twice whether this is what Midas really wanted, and then waved his sceptre and the wish was granted.

Midas quickly returned home to have a go. He was unsure to begin with and laid a shaking hand on a bowl of fruit and then a stool. Each of these turned to the purest gold.

‘Look at this!’ he boasted, turning his chariot into solid gold (which made it worthless as it could no longer move). He then took his young daughter by the hand to show her more, forgetting that she would turn to gold – a golden statue.

‘Oh no!’ cried Midas. As he touched more things he realised that he couldn’t touch any useful object without it becoming useless (yet priceless), nor any food, nor any person.

It was at this point that Midas understood why Dionysus had been reluctant to grant the wish and had checked with him twice before granting it.

Fortunately, Dionysus was very kind, and very forgiving. He allowed Midas to wash away his magic touch in the river Pactolus.
Warm up

1. What is the name of the god in this story? (1 mark)

2. Why was Silenus in Midas’ vineyard? Choose one answer from the options below. (1 mark)
   - He was hiding from Dionysus.
   - He was spying on Midas.
   - He was sleeping to recover from his trip.
   - He was stealing grapes.

Test yourself

3. Who was the creature sleeping in the vineyard? Choose one answer from the options below. (1 mark)
   a goat    Silenus    Dionysus    Midas

4. How many times did Dionysus check with Midas about his wish? Choose one answer from the options below. (1 mark)
   once    three times    five times    twice

5. Why was Midas unsure to start with when he had his wish? (2 marks)

6. Why do you think Dionysus let Midas reverse his wish? (2 marks)

Challenge yourself

7. In your own words, what did Midas learn in this myth? (2 marks)

8. Did Dionysus realise that Midas was making a mistake when he made his wish? Explain your answer fully. (2 marks)
‘The Owl and the Pussy-cat’ by Edward Lear

I

The Owl and the Pussy-cat went to sea
In a beautiful pea-green boat,
They took some honey, and plenty of money,
Wrapped up in a five pound note.
The Owl looked up to the stars above,
And sang to a small guitar,
‘O lovely Pussy! O Pussy my love,
What a beautiful Pussy you are,
You are,
You are!
What a beautiful Pussy you are!’

II

Pussy said to the Owl, ‘You elegant fowl!
How charmingly sweet you sing!
O let us be married! too long we have tarried:
But what shall we do for a ring?’
They sailed away, for a year and a day,
To the land where the Bong-tree grows
And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood
With a ring at the end of his nose,
His nose,
His nose,
With a ring at the end of his nose.

III

‘Dear pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling
Your ring?’ Said the Piggy, ‘I will.’
So they took it away, and were married next day
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.
They dined on mince, and slices of quince,
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,
They danced by the light of the moon,
The moon,
The moon,
They danced by the light of the moon.
1. What type of poem is this? Choose one answer from the options below. Explain your answer. (2 marks)
   - acrostic
   - narrative
   - list
   - shape

2. What did the Owl and the Pussy-cat take with them in the boat? (1 mark)

3. Using the context of the poem, what does ‘tarried’ mean? Choose one answer from the options below. (1 mark)
   - delayed
   - danced
   - cried
   - sailed

4. How long did it take them to get to the land where the Pig lived? (1 mark)

5. What features of poetry are used in this poem? Choose two answers from the options below. (1 mark)
   - repetition
   - simile
   - metaphor
   - rhyming

6. What type of food is a quince? Choose one answer from the options below. Explain your answer. (2 marks)
   - meat
   - fruit
   - pasta
   - biscuit

7. Edward Lear, the poet who wrote this poem, used nonsense words (words with no real meaning) in some of his poetry. Find the nonsense word used in stanza III of the poem. (1 mark)

8. If the Turkey were a human, what job would he have, based on what he does in the poem? (1 mark)

9. Copy the following statements in the order in which they happen in the poem. (2 marks)
   - The Owl tells the Pussy-cat that he loves her.
   - They get married.
   - The Owl and the Pussy-cat set sail.
   - They dance by the light of the moon.
   - They buy a ring from the Pig.

10. Was the Pig a kind character? Explain your answer. (2 marks)
Structure of non-fiction texts

The way in which non-fiction text is structured helps the reader to understand it. Paragraphs are a great tool for structuring text, as they allow the writer to break up the text into smaller sections that focus on different ideas. Sub-headings can also be added to the start of each paragraph to signal what the paragraph is about.

Outer Space

The Solar System is the name that we give to the Sun and everything that travels around it. This includes the eight main planets – Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune – and their moons. It also includes dwarf planets, such as Pluto, and their moons, as well as comets and asteroids and other objects such as satellites and rubbish from spacecraft. The path of a planet around the Sun is called its orbit. The orbits of the planets are not circles but ellipses (oval shapes).

The Sun is about 4,600,000,000 years old and has a diameter of about 1,392,500 kilometres. If you imagine the Earth is the size of a golf ball, then in comparison the Sun would be the size of a beach ball! The surface temperature of the Sun is about 5,500°C. It takes just over 8 minutes for the rays from the Sun to reach us on Earth, although we only receive a tiny fraction of the energy that the Sun gives out.

Mercury is closest to the Sun, which makes it hard for us to see it. It can reach a temperature of 350°C during the day, making it impossible for life to exist there. At night it drops to below −170°C! Whilst it takes 365.25 days (one year) for the Earth to travel around the Sun, it only takes 88 days for Mercury to travel around the Sun as it is so much closer to it.
Warm up

1. Write a sub-heading that could be used for each of the three paragraphs. (2 marks)

2. If a paragraph was needed for each of the main planets, how many more paragraphs would be needed? (1 mark)

Test yourself

3. What temperature can it reach on Mercury in the daytime? Choose one answer from the options below. (1 mark)
   
   –170°C  350°C  365.25°C  88°C

4. What shape are the orbits of the planets? Choose one answer from the options below. (1 mark)

   cuboidal     spherical     eggital     elliptical

5. How many days would one year be on Mercury? Choose one answer from the options below. (1 mark)

   365.25  350  88  5500

6. Find one fact from the report about the Sun. (1 mark)

Challenge yourself

7. What type of text is this? Choose one answer from the options below. Explain your answer clearly. (2 marks)

   recount     explanation     discussion     instructions

8. A mnemonic is a way of remembering an important piece of information. For example, ‘Naughty Elephants Squirt Water’ helps you to remember the order of points on a compass – North, East, South, West. Write a mnemonic to remember the order of the planets in the solar system. (1 mark)