

Introduction

This support pack contains the following materials:

- a pre-reading general knowledge activity;
- the story that you can listen to;
- a comprehension activity based on the story;
- a vocabulary activity.

Before reading the story

Exercise 1

Decide if these characters are from myths, legends or literary stories.

Aladdin	Genji	Hamlet	Jane Eyre
King Arthur	Odin	Robin Hood	Zeus

Myths	Legends	Literature

Read the story.

The Gods and the Human Resources Department

by Chris Rose

Zeus was having a bad day.

“It’s just not fair!” he shouted. The Deputy Human Resources Manager for the Myths, Legends and Folktales sections (Western, Central and Eastern Europe, Africa, India, Asia and Americas) had just told Zeus that the Myths and Legends Departments were going to be merged.

“What does ‘merged’ mean?” asked Zeus.

“Well”, replied the Deputy Human Resources Manager, “as part of our corporate restructuring, the Senior Management team has decided that it would be better to put Myths and Legends together in one department.”

“But they’re completely different!” shouted Zeus.

“We think there are significant structural similarities,” replied the Deputy Human Resources Manager.

“And anyway,” continued Zeus, “What about Folktales? You didn’t mention Folktales at all!”

“Folktales will not be continued.” Zeus didn’t say anything. He was horrified.

“What do you mean, ‘not be continued’?”

“In the interests of maximum efficiency, we have decided that the Folktales Department will no longer be operational in certain regions.”

“No longer operational?”

“Closed.”

Zeus became very angry. He almost threw a thunderbolt, but then realised that he wasn’t working today.

“How can you close Folktales!!!??? What will you do with Baba Yaga? Little Red Riding Hood? The Golden Goose? The snake who ate half of the sky?”

“They will all be merged into the Myths and Legends Department.”

Zeus sat down in the canteen on his own. Robin Hood came over and sat next to him.

“Have you heard the news?” asked Zeus.

“Of course I have,” replied Robin, “Everyone’s heard the news now. I don’t know what management are thinking. They’re crazy.”

“You’re ok, though, aren’t you? I mean, you’re perfectly happy in Legends at least. Nobody can move you from Legends.”

“A few years ago when they tried to move me to Folktales.”

“Good job they didn’t do it! What were they thinking of?”

“It was another restructure. They decided that Legends were the same as Folktales.”

“I hope you corrected them!”

“Certainly did. I pointed out that not only had I made a valuable contribution to a nation’s heritage, but that I was internationally famous, and that I was a reinterpretation of archetypal stories about nature figures.”

“I’m still not quite sure why that doesn’t make you a Myth, though. I get very confused with all this stuff.”

“Well, Myths have to meet certain criteria. Myths have to explain the nature of the world in some way. That’s why most creation stories are Myths.”

“Bah! I’m not sure about that. As you know – I still think I should be in Religion!!!! I’m not a Myth!!”

“I know you’re angry that you’re not allowed in Religion anymore Zeus, but please let’s not start that argument today.”

“But I’m immortal!”

“We’re all immortal – people will tell our stories for ever!”

“But I’m *really* immortal...”

“The problem is, Zeus, and I don’t really know how to say this – I’m afraid that no one believes in you anymore...”

“That’s not true!” replied Zeus. “Every year a few people go and light a fire for me...”

“Hmmm... not many people.”

Zeus sighed. In truth, he knew that Robin Hood was right.

“Anyhow,” continued Robin, “It doesn’t really make much difference. In the end we’re all in the same department after all.”



Zeus thought about the other people in the Myths department. They were a strange group – a mixture of turtles who carried the world, sky gods, elephants and sea monsters. The people from Legends were much more fun. Robin Hood was one of his best friends. Robin told him that the people from Folktales were good fun too, and very friendly, although Zeus was sure that King Arthur wouldn’t be happy about sharing his dinner table with the Magic Porridge Pot. Zeus had one last idea.

“Listen – what about Beowulf? Do you ever see him around? Or Gilgamesh! Now *there’s* a guy! Or my good friend Odysseus!? Where are all those people now?”

“You know very well!” sighed Robin Hood.

“And why aren’t we there with them?”

“You know why - they’re in the Literature Department, Zeus. Written epic literature. We’re mostly oral tradition.”

“Not fair,” said Zeus.

“No, I agree. It’s not fair,” said Robin, “But really, I think we’re better off in Myths and Legends. This way, people can continue to invent stories for us, new stories. And anyway, the Director of the Literature Department is a very strange person...”

After reading

Exercise 2

Decide if the following 12 statements are True or False.

1. Zeus is not happy.
2. Zeus wants to be in a different department.
3. A manager is making changes to the departments.
4. Zeus and the manager agree.
5. The Folktales department will be closed.
6. Some characters from folktales will now be part of myths and legends.
7. Robin Hood is surprised to hear the news.
8. Robin Hood is in Folktales.
9. Robin says myths explain the way the world is.
10. Robin thinks not many people believe in Zeus in the modern age.
11. Beowulf, Gilgamesh and Odysseus are literary characters.
12. Robin Hood says there is a difference between written and spoken stories.

Exercise 3

Put the correct form of one of these verbs in each of the sentences.

To be operational	To have a bad day	To invent
To merge	To reinterpret	To restructure

1. Human Resources have decided that we will be [.....] the recruitment policy for next year, so expect some major changes.
2. I'm feeling really miserable, I don't know why. So many problems. I'm really [.....].
3. Looking at the project planning document for 2008, we can see that all programmes will not [.....] until late 2008, or perhaps 2009.
4. Our creative thinking department has decided that we need to [.....] our image and values to project a more relevant brand for the 21st century.
5. Our research and development department basically [.....] new products for us.
6. The marketing and sales departments were [.....] a few years ago to make one single department.

Answers

Exercise 1: *myths:* Zeus, Odin; *legends:* Robin Hood, King Arthur, Aladdin; *literature:* Hamlet, Jane Eyre, Genji

Exercise 2: 1. True (T); 2. T; 3. T; 4. False (F); 5. T; 6. T; 7. F; 8. F; 9. T; 10. T; 11. T; 12. T

Exercise 3: 1. restructuring; 2. having a bad day; 3. be operational; 4. reinterpret; 5. invent; 6. merged