Myth or legend?

Myths and legends are types of traditional story. But what are the key features of each – and how do they overlap?

Myths

Were often created long ago to explain the mysteries of the world.

Tell of miraculous or unbelievable events.

Are rooted in sacred beliefs.

Often have gods or supernatural beings as main characters.

Have key themes such as trials, journeys and quests.

Show us that mistakes have consequences.

Legends

Are based on real characters, places or events.

Usually have human main characters.

Often focus on a single character.

Are told chronologically, often in episodes.

Often include a moral.

Have themes such as: good and evil, magic, rich and poor, and journeys.

Ensure that tricksters get their comeuppance.

Both

Often have opposites as themes: good and evil, wise and foolish, old and young, beautiful and ugly...

Use rich and evocative language.

Are passed on orally down the generations.

Use imaginative imagery.

Usually contain a moral.

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