

Myths and Fabrications

Dragon myths may be based on actual findings of ancient bones, but sometimes stories about strange creatures are complete fabrications or even downright deceptions.

While stories about dragons may come from dinosaur bones and other fossils found around the world, other mythological creatures also have been inspired by some element of reality. Interpreting old bones and other remains can be a difficult task. Many reports and legends about fantastic creatures may well have been attempts to describe or explain something unknown.

In other cases, myths and legends can reflect how human imagination interacts with the world around us. In Michigan, a giant sand dune is called Sleeping Bear Dune, because its shape does resemble that of a sleeping bear. And there is a native legend about how that bear got there. In a similar way, we connect stars as constellations and see lions, giraffes and fish in the sky.



Are the tales true?

Sometimes, however, people had an interest in creating hoaxes and fabrications. One famous story is that of the fur-bearing trout found in the collections of the Royal Museum of Scotland. The fantastic fish was brought back to Scotland by a woman who had bought a specimen mounted on a wooden plaque from a trip to Canada. It is, in fact, made from rabbit fur attached to parts of a trout. And it was obviously an effective way for someone to make money off a gullible stranger.



Another example is that of the narwhal, an arctic whale that bears a single spiraled tusk extending up to nine feet (2.7 meters) from its upper jaw. In medieval Europe, these impressive tusks were regularly sold as the horns of unicorns. All for a very high price, of course.

As we learn more about dinosaurs and other ancient creatures, it's easy to see that reality can be just as impressive as fiction. But humans have always liked a good story, whether it's true or false. Just as long as people don't tend to pass fiction for fact.

Create Your Own Mythical Creature



Using your imagination (and elements from actual animals), invent your own legendary beast, and tell everyone its story.

1. Think about your creature

Do you imagine it to be big or small? Reptile, mammal or bird – or all of the above? Predator or peaceful herbivore? The sky's the limit (or maybe the bottom of the ocean).

2. Provide visuals

To help people know your creature, give it a visible form. Drawing it or painting it is a good option. You could also make a collage of photos of animal parts (a lion's head, an elephant's body and the wings of an eagle? Why not?). Using modeling dough, papier maché or clay, you could also create a 3D model of your creature, and paint it with your choice of colors.

3. Tell a story

Mythical creatures need mythical stories to keep them in our minds. Give your creature a life of its own by telling its story. Tell us what it does, where it lives, and what it eats. You can even create a whole adventure involving it. If it's a really good story, maybe it will even become a legend.



Dragon's

REAL MYTHS AND UNREAL CREATURES