

Writing Activity: Myth in the Making

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A myth that explains the origin of something is called an *origin myth*. An origin myth takes an event, such as lightning, and builds an imaginative story around it. Consider the myths in Cluster Two. What naturally occurring events do they explain? What kinds of stories have been built around the event? Do terrifying events such as storms have terrifying characters? Do less threatening events such as echoes have less threatening characters? What is the main conflict, or problem, of the story? How is it resolved? What explanation is given for the origin of the event?

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Directions: Follow the steps below and on the following screen to create your own origin myth.

1. Choose an event such as a volcano, meteorite, flood, ozone hole, smog, lunar/solar eclipse, black hole, or erosion.
2. Look up the event in a dictionary, encyclopedia, or other resource. Write down the scientific explanation for its occurrence.

Scientific explanation:

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3. Brainstorm some nonscientific ways the event you chose could be explained. For example, lightning might be explained by a lost person lighting a match in the heavens to see his or her way.

Nonscientific explanation:

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4. Choose the explanation that you think most appeals to the imagination.

5. Create an appropriate character for the story. Provide a brief description:

6. Using the chart on the following screens as a guide, outline a basic plot line for your origin myth. The basic plot line of “Arachne” has been provided as an example.

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	Arachne	Your Origin Myth
naturally occurring event	<i>spider webs</i>	
introductory events	<i>Athena hears that Arachne claims to be a better weaver</i>	

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	Arachne	Your Origin Myth
main conflict	<i>Athena challenges Arachne to a weaving contest</i>	
results of conflict	<i>Athena wins the weaving contest</i>	

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	Arachne	Your Origin Myth
explanation for the origin of the event	<i>To punish Arachne for thinking she is better than a goddess, Athena turns her into a web-spinning spider</i>	

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Remember, an origin myth

- employs imagination to explain natural events
- uses vivid language
- holds the reader's interest
- uses the elements of a good story, such as plot and character development