

HUMANITIES 103.07  
MYTHOLOGY

## HUMANITIES 103.07: MYTHOLOGY

What's a myth?

Current most common use of the term: a false belief

*the myth of overpopulation, five myths about gentrification,  
five myths about classroom technology, three myths about  
China in Kenya, three myths of management*

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What's a myth?

One kind of traditional narrative

Is *Cinderella* a myth?

*Paul Bunyon*?

*Brer Rabbit*?

*The Lord of the Rings*?

*Icarus*?

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What's a myth?

Model Myths: Greek and Roman myths, Indic myths,  
Norse Myths, Celtic Myths (Indo-  
European myths)

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What's a myth?

William Bascom 1965:4

“Myths are prose narratives which in the society in which they are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the distant past. They are accepted on faith; they are taught to be believed; and they can be cited as authority in answer to ignorance, doubt, or disbelief.”

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What's a myth?

William Bascom 1965: 5

Form	Belief	Time	Place	Attitude	Principle Characters
Myth	Fact	Remote Past	Different world: other or earlier	Sacred	Non-human
Legend	Fact	Recent Past	World of today	Secular or sacred	Human
Folktale	Fiction	Any time	Any place	Secular	Human or non-human

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*Why primarily verbal?*

*Why oral?*

*Why prose?*

*Can or should we distinguish between a particular representation or embodiment of a myth and the myth itself?*