The Folk Tradition
What is Oral Transmission

The passing of stories, poems and songs by word-of-mouth from person to person

- Bedtime stories
- Rhymes and jingles learned from friends
- Ghost stories
- Stories told at church

A good definition of being human is that we are storytelling creatures
Myths – are stories that explain objects or events in the natural world as resulting from the action of some supernatural force or entity, most often a god.

Legends – are stories coming down from the past often based on real events or characters from older times. Unlike myths, legends are historical.

You should Know: A theme is a central idea in a literary work
First Dynasty
- Uranus – represented the light and air of heaven
- Gaea – the firm, flat, life-sustaining earth

Second Dynasty – Titans (12 in number)
- Cronus – Killed his father Uranus, who in return cursed Cronus and foretold of him a similar fate.
- Rhea – Helped Zeus survive Cronus’ hunger!

Third Dynasty – Olympian Divinities
- Class handout
Greek Legends

We will read

- Daedalus and Icarus
- Narcissus and Echo
- Pandora
- Pygmalion
- Perseus
Types of Oral Literature

- **Folk Tales** – are brief stories passed by word of mouth from generation to generation.

- **Tall Tales** – are also folk tales, however tall tales are often light-hearted or humorous and contain highly exaggerated, unrealistic elements.

- **Fairy Tales** – stores that deal with mischievous spirits and other supernatural occurrences, often in medieval settings.
Types of Oral Literature

- **Parables** – very brief stories told to teach a moral lesson.

- **Fables** – brief stories, often with animal characters, told to express a moral.

- **Proverbs or Adage** – a traditional saying, such as “You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink.”
Folk Songs – are traditional or composed songs typically made up of stanzas, a refrain and a simple melody.

Spirituals – are religious songs from the African-American folk tradition.

Epics – a long story, often told in verse, involving heroes and gods. Epics are often passed down orally and often have anonymous authors.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Myth</td>
<td>Stories that may contain elements of fantasy, but are generally based on real events</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>Tall Tale</td>
<td>Produced by a culture as a way of explaining objects or events in nature</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>Legends</td>
<td>The passing of stories, poems and songs by word of mouth</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>Oral Tradition</td>
<td>Works that often refers to passages in the bible</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>One example is the story of George Washington chopping down the cherry tree</td>
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“Haste makes waste” is an example of a proverb

A theme is a central idea in a literary work

Refrain is found only in song, and repetition is found only in poetry.

The oral tradition of the United States has origins in Native American culture, Europe, Asia and Africa

Stories about Pecos Bill and Paul Bunyan are examples of legends.