Elements of Myths
Definition

Myth:

- A story of unknown authorship that people told long ago in an attempt to answer serious questions about how important things began and occurred.
- Stories that explain natural occurrences and express beliefs of right and wrong.
Myth Uses

- To explain natural phenomena or an occurrence.
- To explain the creation of the world.
- To teach people moral lessons.
Myth Uses contd.

- To explain some historical event.
- To explain some ancient religious practices.
- To reveal the common hopes and fears of mankind.
Characteristics of Myths

- Myths usually have a religious sense.

- Myths are early man's desire to explain the universe.
  - Example: Apollo, the son of Zeus, drove the chariot of the sun across the sky.
Myths generally involve nature or the adventure of gods/goddesses and heroes.
The gods, goddesses, and heroes are superhuman in nature.

- Example: Atlas bore the weight of the world and heavens on his shoulders.
Gods and Goddesses

Gods sometimes appear in disguised form.

• Examples:
  • Zeus came to Hera as a poor bird caught in a storm.
  • Athena appeared as an old woman and challenged Arachne to a weaving contest.
Human emotions are experienced by the gods.

- Examples:
  - Hera was jealous.
  - Demeter mourned the loss of her daughter when her daughter was abducted.
Characteristics of Myths

- **Magic** is often present in myths.
  - Ex.: Athena came full-grown out of the forehead of Zeus.
Characteristics of Myths

- A **metamorphosis** may occur (transformation/change)
  - Example: Smyrna is turned into a myrrh tree.