

## GRADE 9

### FOLKTALES

Read through the following notes and folktale. Answer the questions which follow:

# Folklore

### What is Folklore?

The term folklore is generally used to refer to the traditional beliefs, myths, tales, and practices of a people which have been disseminated in an informal manner -- usually via word of mouth. The term "folklore" discusses concepts such as; "the lore of the people", and "the manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs etc. of the olden times".

### What is a folktale? (folktale)

A folktale is a story or legend forming part of an oral tradition.

Folktales possess many or all of the characteristics listed below.

- Are generally part of the oral tradition of a group.
- Are more frequently told than read.
- Are passed down from one generation to another.
- Take on the characteristics of the time and place in which they are told.
- Sometimes take on the personality of the storyteller.
- Speak to universal and timeless themes.
- Try to make sense of our existence, help humans cope with the world in which they live, or explain the origin of something.
- Are often about the common person.
- May contain supernatural elements.
- Function to validate certain aspects of culture.

### What is a Tall Tale?

A tall tale is an extravagant, fanciful or greatly exaggerated story. Usually focuses on the achievements of the ultimate hero.

### What is a Myth?

Myths are traditional, typically ancient stories dealing with supernatural beings, ancestors, or heroes that serves as a fundamental type in the worldview of a people. The purpose of myths is to account for the origins of something, explain aspects of the natural world or delineate the psychology, customs, or ideals of society. In many myths, the main characters are gods or demi-gods and the story may have some religious meaning or background.

### **What is a Legend?**

A legend is a traditional tale handed down from earlier times and believed to have an historical basis.

### **What are Urban Legends?**

Urban Legends are apocryphal stories involving rather fantastic contemporary incidents which have a tantalizing bit of plausibility to them. Urban legends contain many folkloric elements and are disseminated through mass media.

### **What is a Fable?**

A fable is a short narrative making a moral point. Often employs animals with human characteristics (powers of speech, etc.) as the main characters of the story.

### **What is a Fairy Tale?**

A fairy tale is a fanciful tale of legendary deeds and creatures, usually intended for children

## **The Story of the Lightning and the Thunder**

### **Nigerian Folktale**

In the olden days the thunder and lightning lived on the earth amongst all the other people, but the king made them live at the far end of the town, as far as possible from other people's houses.

The thunder was an old mother sheep, and the lightning was her son, a ram. Whenever the ram got angry he used to go about and burn houses and knock down trees; he even did damage on the farms, and sometimes killed people. Whenever the lightning did these things, his mother used to call out to him in a very loud voice to stop and not to do any more damage; but the lightning did not care in the least for what his mother said, and when he was in a bad temper used to do a very large amount of damage. At last the people could not stand it any longer, and complained to the king.

So the king made a special order that the sheep (Thunder) and her son, the ram (Lightning), should leave the town and live in the far bush. This did not do much good, as when the ram got angry he still burnt the forest, and the flames sometimes spread to the farms and consumed them.

So the people complained again, and the king banished both the lightning and the thunder from the earth and made them live in the sky, where they could not cause so much destruction. Ever since, when the lightning is angry, he commits damage as before, but you can hear his mother, the thunder, rebuking him and telling him to stop. Sometimes, however,

when the mother has gone away some distance from her naughty son, you can still see that he is angry and is doing damage, but his mother's voice cannot be heard.

*Folklore: generally used to refer to the traditional beliefs, myths, tales and practices of a people which have been disseminated in an informal manner.*

1. What makes this story a good example of a folktale?
2. Why do you think people made up stories like these to explain natural phenomena?
3. Comment on the type of animals used for the lightning and the thunder.
4. Do you think this story adequately explains thunder and lightning?
5. Create your own folktale in which you explain the phenomena of thunder and lightning.