**Common Elements of Myth**

This list is by no means complete (there are many more possibilities!) and not every myth contains all of these elements.

1. A story that is or was considered a true explanation of the natural world and how it came to be.

2. Characters are often non-human – e.g. gods, goddesses, supernatural beings, first people.

3. Setting (the place and time) is often a previous proto-world (somewhat like our world, but different)

4. Events that bend or break natural laws (perhaps through connections to older worlds, supernatural events).

8. Presence of Mystery, or the Unknown (has a “sacred” tinge - maybe something that we normal mortals cannot access).

9. Myths are often based on structures of opposites (light/dark, good/evil, being/nothingness, etc.) that we must somehow connect or bridge. Characters in myths often have to struggle with trying to bring those opposites together.

10. Myths try to answer big life questions that most humans have had and will continue to have. These questions are things like, “Why are we here?” “What is our purpose on earth?” – life’s fundamental questions.

11. Sometimes a myth explains a religious practice or a significant ritual in a culture (a myth that explains why people give offerings to gods, or why having children is important, for example).

12. Myths may contain an explanation of the universe or a particular event or phenomenon that can explain the worldview of the myth tellers

13. A myth may tell us how to live: assumptions, values, core meanings of individuals, families, communities.

(List adapted from “What is Myth?” - <http://www.faculty.de.gcsu.edu/~mmagouli/defmyth.htm>, accessed June 2013)