

Polynesian Myths and Legends: Stories Across the Pacific

Reading Comprehension Passage

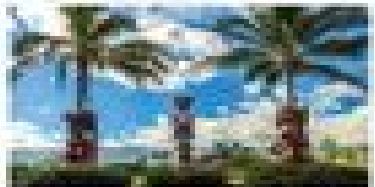
POLYNESIAN MYTHS AND LEGENDS: STORIES ACROSS THE PACIFIC

Answer Key

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1. What is Tangaroa associated with in Polynesian mythology?
- a) Agriculture
 - b) The Sky
 - c) The Sea
 - d) Fire
2. Which legendary figure is known for feats of strength and heroism?
- a) Lono
 - b) Rangī
 - c) Maui
 - d) Papa
3. What does the story of Rangī and Papa explain?
- a) The Creation of the World
 - b) The Discovery of Fire
 - c) The Journey to the Underworld
 - d) The Rise of Agriculture
4. What common theme do many Polynesian myths share?
- a) The Separation of Sky and Earth
 - b) The Conquest of Other Islands
 - c) The Battle of Gods
 - d) The Destruction of the World

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Introduction: Polynesia, a vast region of the Pacific Ocean, is home to a rich tapestry of myths and legends that have been passed down through generations. These narratives, woven into the fabric of Polynesian cultures, offer insights into the beliefs, values, and creativity of the diverse island communities that dot the ocean expanse.

Origins of Polynesian Myths: The origins of Polynesian myths can be traced back thousands of years. As skilled navigators and seafarers, Polynesians traversed the vast Pacific, settling on islands like Hawaii, Tahiti, Samoa, and New Zealand. Each island developed its own unique mythology, shaped by the local environment, experiences, and cultural nuances.

Nature-Based Deities: Polynesian myths often feature powerful deities associated with natural elements. Tangaroa, the god of the sea, is revered across many Polynesian cultures. Lono, associated with fertility and agriculture, is prominent in Hawaiian mythology. These deities personify the forces of nature and hold a significant place in the storytelling tradition.

Legendary Heroes and Heroines: Heroes and heroines play central roles in Polynesian myths. Maui, a mischievous and clever demigod, features prominently across many Polynesian cultures. Known for his feats of bravery, such as slowing the sun or fishing up islands, Maui embodies the spirit of adventure and resourcefulness.

Common Themes: While Polynesian myths vary significantly across different cultures, they often share common themes. The story of Rangī and Papa, for instance, narrates the separation of the sky and the earth, explaining the origin of life on the islands. These myths provide explanations for the origins of



life on the islands. As expert navigators, Polynesians integrated navigational knowledge into their myths, explaining the art of navigation and the use of natural cues like bird migrations and star patterns. These myths preserve the practical wisdom required for successful navigation.

The Teacher's
SPACE

The Pacific And Other Stories

Mark Helprin



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