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LEGEND AS A TYPE OF FOLKLORE

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Folklore is the expressive body of culture shared by a particular group of people; it encompasses the traditions common to that culture, subculture or group. These include oral traditions such as tales, proverbs and jokes. They include material culture, ranging from traditional building styles to handmade toys common to the group. Folklore also includes customary lore, the forms and rituals of celebrations such as Christmas and weddings, folk dances and initiation rites.⁵

Individual folklore artifacts are commonly classified as one of three types: material, verbal or customary lore. For the most part self-explanatory, these categories include physical objects (material folklore), common sayings, expressions, stories and songs (verbal folklore), and beliefs and ways of doing things (customary folklore). There is also a fourth major subgenre defined for children's folklore and games (childlore), as the collection and interpretation of this fertile topic is peculiar to school yards and neighborhood streets. Each of these genres and their subtypes is intended to organize and categorize the folklore artifacts; they provide common vocabulary and consistent labeling for folklorists to communicate with each other⁶.

"Legend is a genre of folklore that consists of a narrative featuring human actions perceived or believed both by teller and listeners to have taken place within human history. Narratives in this genre may demonstrate human values, and possess certain qualities that give the tale verisimilitude. Legend, for its active and passive participants, includes no happenings that are outside the realm of 'possibility,' but may include miracles. Legends may be transformed over time, in order to keep them fresh, vital, and realistic. Many legends operate within the realm of uncertainty, never being entirely believed by the participants, but also never being resolutely doubted."⁷

Legend, traditional story or group of stories told about a particular person or place. Formerly the term legend meant a tale about a saint. Legends resemble folktales in content; they may include supernatural beings, elements of mythology, or explanations of natural phenomena, but they are associated with a particular locality or person and are told as a matter of history⁸.

Some legends are the unique property of the place or person that they depict, such as the story of young George Washington, the future first president of the United States, who confesses to chopping down the cherry tree. But many local legends are actually well-known folktales that have become attached to some particular person or place. For

⁵ Sims & Stephens 2005, pp. 7-8

⁶ Jackson, Bruce. "Folkloristics", *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 98, No. 387 (January- March), 1985, pp. 95-101.

⁷ Bruce, J. Douglas. "The Development of Arthurian Romance in Mediæval France." *The Sewanee Review* 13.3 (1905): 319-35. *JSTOR*. Web. 05 May 2014. p-321 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/27530706?ref=searchgateway:858e9131e2be44999f4dfae3fef15bf9>>.



example, a widely distributed folktale of an excellent marksman who is forced to shoot an apple, hazelnut, or some other object from his son’s head has become associated with the Swiss hero William Tell.

For centuries, legends have played a pivotal role in shaping human culture and society, leaving their mark on our collective imagination. These narratives are a unique form of storytelling that often contain a kernel of truth but are typically infused with supernatural, fantastical, or extraordinary elements.

Legends captivate our attention and resonate with our innate curiosity and thirst for adventure. In this article, we will look into the complex and fascinating world of legends by uncovering their origins, purposes, and the various forms they take.

A legend can be defined as a traditional story or narrative about a historical event, person, or place, which may involve miraculous or supernatural occurrences. These stories are passed down through generations and often serve to teach moral lessons, explain natural phenomena, or entertain⁹.

Characteristics of Legends

Legends possess several unique characteristics that differentiate them from other forms of folklore, such as myths, fables, and folktales. The primary distinctions among these forms are as follows:

Folklore Type	Key Characteristics
Legends	Based on real events or people, exaggerated or embellished over time, often teach a moral lesson or explain a cultural belief.
Myths	Relate to divine beings and supernatural forces, provide explanations for natural phenomena or the origin of the world.
Fables	Short stories that teach a moral lesson, usually involving animals as the main characters.

This clear distinction between the various forms of folklore can help in identifying and categorizing traditional narratives and understanding their significance within a specific cultural context¹⁰.

Legends serve various purposes in societies throughout history. They often provide an insight into the values, beliefs, and morals of a specific culture. Legends are also used to entertain, educate, and sometimes preserve historical events¹¹.

Some of the primary purposes of legends include:

Moral lessons: Legends frequently portray a moral message, emphasizing the consequences of right and wrong behavior. These stories may involve heroes overcoming obstacles or villains receiving punishment for their misdeeds.

⁸ "Legend." *Wikipedia*. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legend>. Accessed 20 October 2018

⁹ Haydock, Nickolas. *Movie Medievalism: The Imaginary Middle Ages*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008. Kindle Version.p-82

¹⁰ Legend." *Wikipedia*. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legend>. Accessed 20 October 2018

¹¹ Bascom, William R. "Four functions of folklore", *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 67, 1954, pp. 333-49.



To explain the unknown: In the past, scientific knowledge was limited, and legends helped people make sense of natural phenomena such as severe weather or unusual events. These stories attempted to provide explanations for events beyond human comprehension.

To express cultural identity: Legends often reflect the customs, traditions, and beliefs of a specific group of people. They can reveal a society's values, creating a shared identity among members.

Pedagogical tool: Legends can be used as a means to teach life lessons, history, and cultural practices. They have been an integral part of oral traditions and passing knowledge down through generations.

Being integral part of folklore, legend delivers the message to its readers in the way that they can easily cope up with the view which has been told by their ancestors.

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