

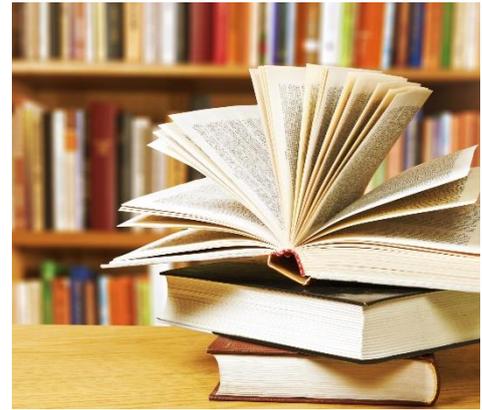
## Summer Reading Challenge!

Here, at Laurus Ryecroft, we know that reading is the most beneficial thing you can do to improve **in EVERY SUBJECT!**

It is also a fantastic way to relax. Therefore, we have put together a series of myths from around the world for you to enjoy over your summer holidays. Why don't you challenge yourself to reading one per week?

If you read the texts and fill in the table below, then rewards will be available if you get this completed work to your new English teacher during your first week at Ryecroft. We have given you a bit of help with the first two.

Myths have been shared throughout the world and are often meant to teach their reader something about the world around them or demonstrate how they should or shouldn't behave; we call this the **moral** of the story.



Story:	What is it about?	What is the moral of the story?
<b>Arachne</b> , a Greek myth		Example answer: <i>The moral of this myth is not to be boastful or arrogant, like Aracne, and to not proclaim yourself better than the gods.</i>
<b>Pandora's Box</b> , a Greek myth	Example answer: <i>Pandora and her husband, Epimetheus, are given a box by the gods and told not to open it. Pandora cannot resist and opens the box unleashing all the evils in the world upon mankind.</i>	
<b>The Lost Camel</b> , An Indian Folktale		

<p><b>Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves</b>, a tale from the Arabian Nights</p>		
<p><b>The Rainbow Serpent</b>, An Aboriginal Story from Australia</p>		
<p>Select your own story here: <a href="http://WorldStories.com">WorldStories</a></p>		

## Arachne, a Greek myth

Edited and adapted from 'Mythos' by Stephen Fry



In a small cottage, outside the town of Ionia, in the kingdom of Lydia there lived a merchant and craftsman called Idmon. His wife had died and he had one daughter, Arachne. Idmon was as proud of Arachne as ever father was of daughter. For since her early childhood, she had shown extraordinary skill as a weaver.

Spinning and weaving were naturally of great importance in those days.

But as with all human practices, there are those who have the mysterious ability to raise the everyday and ordinary to the level of art. From the very first, Arachne's skill at the loom was the talk and pride of all Ionia. The speed and accuracy of her work was astonishing; the dexterity with which she selected one coloured thread after another without looking, stunned her admirers. But it was the pictures, patterns and intricate designs she created that caused her onlookers to burst into applause.

All were agreed that Arachne was the kind of phenomenon that might come only once in five centuries. Such praise as she daily received would have gone to anyone's head.

One fateful afternoon as Arachne gazed at her work, she murmured, 'Yes, I truly think if Athena herself were to sit down and spin with me she would find herself unable to match my skill.'

A week or so later, while her usual crowd were gathered around Arachne to admire her skill, they were interrupted by a loud knocking on the door.

It was opened to reveal a bent and wrinkled old woman. 'I do hope I've come to the right place,' she wheezed. 'I'm told a wonderful weaver lives here.' She was invited in and began to examine Arachne's latest tapestry. 'Hard to believe that a mortal could do such work. Surely Athena herself had a hand in this?'

'I hardly think,' Arachne said with a touch of impatience, 'that Athena could do anything half so fine.'

'Oh, you think Athena inferior to you? What would you say to her if she were here now?'

'I would urge her to confess that I am a better weaver.'

'Then urge away, foolish mortal!'

With these words, the wrinkles melted away and the bent old woman straightened herself into the magnificent form of Athena herself. The crowd of onlookers fell back in stunned surprise.

'Well,' Arachne managed to say with as much calmness in her voice as she could manage, 'I've no wish to offend, but it is, I think, undoubtedly true that as an artist of the loom I have no rival, on earth or Olympus.'

'Really?' Athena arched an eyebrow. 'Let's discover then. I shall go first.'

As if to deliberately and publicly humiliate Arachne, Athena created a tapestry that showed the price paid by mortals for daring to set themselves up as superiors to the gods. The work was magnificent and when she was finished, Athena stood back and received the acclamation that was due her.

Arachne applauded along with everyone else but secretly had come up with a plan herself. If Athena was going to depict mortals being punished for their hubris, she would create a tapestry, detailing the cruel treatment of mortals at the hands of the gods.

When Arachne started, the onlookers drew back horrified and disturbed by the girl's foolish audacity. And indeed, Arachne had been in a sort of maddened haze as she had worked. After she had completed it and stepped back to view her undeniably exceptional work, she suddenly realised what she had done: she had deliberately enraged Athena.

Arachne ran from the cottage, trailing lengths of thread behind and threatening to end her life rather than face the punishment of Athena. But Athena was too quick for her. 'A talent like yours must never die. You shall spin and weave all your days, spin and weave, spin and weave...'

As she spoke, Arachne started to shrivel and shrink and the threads she held turned into glistening silk. She was a girl no longer but a creature destined to busily spin and weave.

This is how the first spider – the first arachnid – came into being. It was not a punishment as some would have it, but a prize for winning a great competition. The right to work and weave masterpieces forever.

## Pandora's Box, a Greek myth



Long ago and far away, high up amongst the clouds of Mount Olympus, the gods enjoyed a life of pleasure and quarrelling. Whenever they tired of quarrelling amongst themselves, they turned their attention to playing with people, as you might play with your toys.

One day, the gods created a beautiful woman called Pandora and took her to Prometheus. He knew the gods were angry with him as he had stolen fire from them and given it to humans. Prometheus was frightened that the gods were trying to trick him to get their own back and he decided to ignore her.

However, his brother, Epimetheus, fell in love with the beautiful Pandora and decided to marry her. The couple lived happily together until ... one day Mercury, the messenger of the gods, arrived with a mysterious box. He asked Pandora and her husband to take care of it but to never open it.

For days Pandora couldn't take her eyes off the box. All the time she wondered what was inside; could it be full of glittering jewels, glamorous dresses, golden coins? Whenever Epimetheus was away and no one was around, Pandora would creep up to the box and run her fingers over the polished wood and the golden clasp. However, one day, when Epimetheus was out hunting, she could bear it no longer, her curiosity overcame her. Making sure she was not being watched, she crept up to the box and gingerly opened the clasp. Slowly lifting the lid, she looked inside.

But to her surprise there were no glittering jewels, glamorous dresses, golden coins – instead the gods had filled the box with all evils now known to mankind. Disease, misery and death swooped and buzzed around stinging her. Pandora screamed and screamed with pain and fear. Epimetheus heard her cries as he rode into the courtyard. Flinging himself from his horse, he ran to her aid. Taking her into his arms he comforted her as the evils flew out of the castle and spread across the land.

Between her sobs, Pandora and Epimetheus heard a tiny little voice calling from the box. 'Let me out! Let me out!' Believing that nothing inside the box could be worse than the horrors released, they opened the lid once more.

All that remained was a tiny crumpled butterfly, shivering in the corner. Slowly it unfolded its sparkling wings and brushed them against Pandora, healing her wounds. The beautiful butterfly was hope, which Mercury had hidden amongst the evils, taking pity on mankind when he realised what the gods were plotting.

## The Lost Camel, An Indian Folktale



Once, there was a merchant, not a rich merchant. And he had a camel, not a beautiful camel. But he loved that camel. And one day, he came to look for the camel but the camel was not there. The camel was gone.

'Oh, where is my camel? My camel, where is he?' And he looked all around in every direction; he searched high and low, but could he find his camel?

Finally, he saw coming along the path towards him, three strangers. Along the tree-lined path they walked towards him, and when they reached him he stopped the first.

'Have you seen my camel?'

'Your camel is blind in one eye.'

'That is true; my camel is blind in one eye. Where is he?'

But the stranger walked on.

The second traveller now arrived.

'Have you seen my camel?'

'Your camel is lame in one leg.'

'That is so. Where is he, what have you done with him?'

But the traveller went on.

The third stranger now stopped.

'Have you seen my camel?'

'Your camel has a short tail.'

'This is true! What have you done with him?'

But the traveller walked on.

The merchant followed the three travellers as they went along the tree-lined path. 'Where is my camel? You have stolen my camel! You have stolen him! Thieves! Vagabonds!'

Along the path they went. The path became a wide, tree-lined avenue. And on he went, even more furious than before for they seemed to pay no attention to him.

More and more he berated them, until now they entered into the gardens of the palace of the sultan. There were the perfumed gardens, the jasmine, the beautiful flowers.

And there appeared the sultan: 'What is the meaning of all this noise?'

'These strangers have stolen my camel!'

'How do you know this?'

'They know that my camel is blind in one eye! They know my camel is lame in one leg! They know my camel has a short tail!'

'How do you know this?' asked the sultan.

And the first stranger spoke: 'I know his camel is blind in one eye, for as we came along the tree-lined path and along the tree-lined avenue, the leaves had been torn from the branches of the trees that stood to the right of the path. The trees on the left side had not been touched.'

'How do you know his camel is lame in one leg?'

'Following the tracks of the camel,' said the second stranger, 'it was clear by the footprints.'

'How do you know the camel has a short tail?'

'It is clear his camel has a short tail,' spoke the third stranger. 'There were drops of blood along the way. If the camel had a longer tail, he would have swept the insects aside that sucked the blood.'

'It is true,' said the sultan. 'Your camel arrived in my gardens but a short time ago.'

And the camel was brought forth. Not a beautiful camel. But the merchant kissed his camel.

'Oh, my camel! My beautiful camel is returned to me.'

And the sultan turned to the three travellers: 'You are wise men indeed. Remain here,' said the sultan, 'and be my advisors.'

And never before that nor since has any sultan ever received more wisdom and advice than he did from those three.

## Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, a tale from the Arabian Nights



Each evening Ali Baba went out to gather twigs and branches for his wife so that she had enough firewood to cook the stew for dinner.

One day, Ali Baba went further than usual to hunt for fallen branches beneath the trees that grew beside the rocky cliffs near the high hills.

Suddenly, he heard a great clatter of hooves on the rocky path. He was afraid. He climbed the nearest tree and hid among the leaves.

He was well hidden but was able to peer between the leaves. He was astonished to see a long line of men on horseback, riding one behind the other.

Ali Baba counted them as they rode beneath the tree where he hid.

'One ... two ... three ... four,' and many, many, many more, until he had counted forty.

Finally, the forty riders reached a cliff face. They dismounted and removed the saddlebags from their horses' backs. Ali Baba noticed that the bags were bulging.

'Perhaps the bags are full of treasure,' thought Ali Baba. 'These men are thieves and robbers. Maybe they are about to hide their loot.'

Then thieves lined up behind their leader. They were right in front of the steep rocky cliff.

'How silly!' Ali Baba thought. 'There is nowhere to hide treasure here.'

At that moment, one of the riders spoke loudly.

'Open Sesame!' he cried.

Suddenly, a secret door in the rock opened. The forty riders entered a hidden cave. They were going to hide the treasure they had stolen.

When they were all inside, the leader shouted, 'Close Sesame!'

The secret door closed again with the thieves hidden safely inside.

Ali Baba waited, hidden in his treetop until the riders came out of the cave again. He counted carefully to make sure that they were all out.

'One ... two ... three ... four,' and many, many, many more until he reached thirty-nine.

Last of all came the leader. When he stood outside the cave, he again said, 'Close Sesame!'

The secret rock door closed.

Ali Baba peered through the leaves. He was amazed to see how perfectly the door fitted into the rock.

The thieves put the empty saddlebags over their horses. Then they set off, one by one.

Ali Baba counted to make sure that they had all gone. 'One ... two ... three ... four,' and many, many, many more until he reached forty. Then he listened until he could no longer hear any hooves clattering – he was safe!

Ali Baba climbed down the tree and walked up to the rocky cliff. He was curious to discover if the magic door would open for him if he said the special word. Would he be brave enough to try?

Ali Baba stood there. He looked at the rocky cliff. He thought about all the treasure in the cave, and he thought about the forty thieves. He couldn't hear anything at all.

At last, he decided, 'I must be safe now. So I shall be brave and say the magic words out loud.'

Then Ali Baba went close to the rocky cliff.

'Open Sesame!' he said. The door opened.

Ali Baba could see steps leading down. Little lamps of burning oil lit the stairway. He was just about to descend the steps when he remembered. The leader of the thieves had spoken two words to close the magic door.

Ali Baba decided that he should shut the magic door too. It would not be a good idea for anyone else to see the entrance to the cave of treasure.

'Close Sesame!' he cried, and the magic door slid shut.

After that, Ali Baba crept down the stone steps until he reached the treasure cave. He gazed all around in amazement. There were thousands of sparkling jewels in great heaps: diamonds, rubies, emeralds and every other sort of precious gem. Then there was gold! Ali Baba's eyes grew wide in wonder when he saw the vast piles of gold coins.

However, Ali Baba was not greedy. He didn't want the diamonds, or the rubies or the emeralds. Although Ali Baba was a poor man, he had no desire to take all the gold coins. He wanted just one little gold coin. It would be enough to buy food for himself and his family.

So Ali Baba took one small coin and ran back up the stone steps. At the top, he took a deep breath.

'Open Sesame!' he gasped.

Immediately the magic door opened. With a sigh of relief, Ali Baba hurried outside. Then he turned and called out the magic words.

'Close Sesame!'

The door slid shut. Ali Baba was safe.

However, there was something Ali Baba did not know. His brother, Kassim, had also come to find firewood. Kassim had seen Ali Baba come out of the cave and speak some magic words. He had seen the magic rock door close.

'Oh, Ali Baba! My brother! What is this magic that I have just seen?' cried Kassim.

Ali Baba told his brother everything. He warned Kassim that the forty thieves might return any minute. So they both gathered up armfuls of firewood, and they hurried home, each to their own house.

Ali Baba was pleased to have his one small gold coin. His wife was also pleased to have one small gold coin. However, in the house next door, Kassim was not pleased. He was greedy. Kassim told his wife all about his younger brother's adventure. His wife was not pleased. She was just as greedy as her husband.

'Kassim,' she said. 'Go back to the rocky cliffs and say the magic words. Go down into the cave and fetch me some jewels and gold coins. I want lots of large gold coins.' She gave him a large bag to carry all the treasure.

Kassim did as his wife had said. He took the bag and ran back to the rocks.

In front of the cliff, he said the magic words. 'Open Sesame!'

When the secret door opened, Kassim hurried inside.

He spoke the magic words to close the door. 'Close Sesame!'

The little oil lamps were still alight. Kassim was able to see the stairway that led down to the treasure cave. He ran down the stone steps as fast as he could.

When Kassim saw all the sparkling jewels and glistening gold, his eyes lit up with greed. He began stuffing gems and coins into his bag. It was soon filled to the brim; there was no room for any more treasure.

Kassim became so excited that something dreadful happened. He forgot the magic words! Kassim ran up the stone steps and stood in front of the magic door.

'Open Barley!' he cried.

Nothing happened.

'Open Oats!'

Nothing happened.

Kassim was worried.

'I know it was something to eat,' he said to himself. So he tried everything he could think of.

'Open Wheat! Open Rye! Open Pumpkin! Open Melon!'

At that moment, something even more dreadful happened. The magic door slid open, and there stood the thieves who had stolen the treasure.

'Robbers!' squealed Kassim. Before he had time to count them, the leader pulled out his sword. He threatened Kassim with his sharp curved blade.

The thieves' leader saw that Kassim's was bag bulging with their treasure.

He poked his sword into Kassim, and the greedy man fell down, never to move again.

That night Kassim's wife became worried when her husband didn't return home with any treasure. She went next door to Ali Baba.

Ali Baba listened to her story, and he feared the worst. 'I had better go and find him,' he said to her.

He was afraid that the thieves had found Kassim.

Ali Baba took a lantern and went up into the rocky mountains to look for his brother. On the ground in front of the hidden cave lay Kassim's dead body.

Ali Baba lifted his brother and carried him back home so that the family could bury him properly.

The next day the thieves returned to their hidden cave with more treasure that they had stolen. The thieves' leader expected to see the lifeless body of the man he had killed – but it wasn't there!

'Stop! Wait!' the leader cried. He bent down to study the ground, and he was able to see the tracks from where the body had been taken.

'We must hide our treasure quickly,' he cried out to the others. 'I must follow these tracks. It seems as though someone else knows of our secret hiding place. Go home and sharpen your swords. Be ready for a fight tomorrow. Hire a large cart and a strong donkey. Buy thirty-nine large olive oil jars that are big enough to hide inside. Make a hole in each lid so that you can get fresh air into the jar to breathe. Make sure everything is ready and then meet me here tomorrow at daybreak.'

While the thirty-nine robbers did as he had said, their leader followed the tracks all the way to Ali Baba's house.

'When I come back tomorrow,' said the thief to himself. 'I shall pretend to be a seller of fine quality olive oil. I shall park my cart of olive oil jars in this man's yard, and I'll go and knock on his door. When I shout, 'Olive oil!' my thieves will come rushing in with their swords drawn, ready for a fight.'

Little did the man know, Ali Baba's maid, Morgiana, had come quietly out of the back door of the house. She overheard every word that the man muttered to himself.

He continued talking to himself. 'In my cart, I shall have thirty-nine olive oil jars. In each jar, I shall have a man armed with a sharp sword.' The man gave an evil laugh. 'When the man inside opens the door he won't know what hit him!'

Morgiana crept back into the house to tell Ali Baba what she had overheard. She began by saying, 'I have a plan ...' and then she told Ali Baba what her plan was.

The next day, early in the morning, the thieves met up with their leader. There were thirty-nine enormous jars on the cart. A man hid in each empty olive oil jar. Their leader put a lid on the top of each jar.

A sturdy donkey pulled the heavy cart to Ali Baba's house. The thieves' leader parked his cart in Ali Baba's yard. Then he went and knocked on the door.

Ali Baba opened the door.

'You're an olive oil merchant?' he said. 'Splendid, that is just what we need. I shall buy a jar from you. I will pay you a good price, but first, come in and have a drink with us.'

The man happily accepted a drink, but he didn't know that Morgiana had put sleeping powder into the liquid.

Morgiana crept into the yard. She was carrying a dish of soft cheese, and she used it to plug all the breathing holes in the jars. When the thieves had no more fresh air to breathe, they collapsed into the bottom of their jars.

Morgiana then ran to the house of the village Sheikh. She knocked politely on the door and told her story as soon as she was taken inside.

'Evil men came to the house of Ali Baba. They came armed with sharp swords to kill him, but I have managed to trick them and trap them. They are the ones who have been robbing the travellers on the road to our village. They have been stealing from people in all the towns and villages near here.'

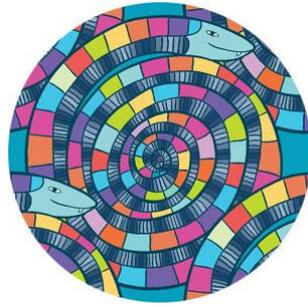
The Sheik called on the guards. They went to Ali Baba's house and captured all forty thieves.

'My dungeon is deep and has many chambers,' said the Sheik. 'There is plenty of space to keep them there for a long, long time. Bread, water and a hard stone floor – that's good enough for them.'

Then the guards went with Ali Baba to bring all the treasure back to the village. The Sheik tried to return all the jewels and all the money to their rightful owners. In the end, there was still some treasure left over. So the Sheik shared what remained with Ali Baba and Morgiana.

Ali Baba's son fell in love with Morgiana. She eventually married him, and so this story had a happy ending for Ali Baba and his family.

## The Rainbow Serpent, An Aboriginal Story from Australia



Long ago in the Dreamtime a group of Aboriginals were out hunting. After many hours, they grew tired and decided to rest and as they sat around, telling stories and warming their hands by the fire, one of them looked up.

There on the horizon was a beautiful multi-coloured arch – a rainbow. But the Aboriginals thought that it was a serpent moving from one waterhole to another and they were frightened as they did not want the huge brightly-coloured serpent in a waterhole near their camp. But they were grateful that he did not seem to be moving too near their own waterhole.

One young man, wanted to know more about the Rainbow Serpent so when he returned home, he asked the old men of his tribe why the hunters had been scared of the Rainbow Serpent.

The old men told him that the Rainbow Serpent was one of the Dreamtime creatures who had shaped the Earth.



In the beginning the Earth was flat. As the Rainbow Serpent wound his way across the land, the movement of his body formed the mountains and the valleys where the rivers lived. He was the biggest of the Dreamtime Beings and his power scared even the other Dreamtime Creatures.

At last, tired with the effort of shaping the Earth, the Rainbow Serpent crawled into a waterhole where he lay in the cool water which soothed him and softened the bright colours of his body.

Each time the animals visited the waterhole, they were careful not to disturb the water, for although they could not see him they knew he was there.

He only came out after heavy rainstorms when his waterhole was disturbed and when the sun touched his coloured body. Then he rose up from the waterhole and travelled over the tree-tops, up through the clouds and across the plain to another waterhole.

The people were fearful that he was angry and would churn up the land once again so they were very quiet and still as he moved to his new home. Once he was there he disappeared beneath the water again and was not to be seen.

That is why Aboriginals are careful not to disturb the Rainbow Serpent, as they see him going across the sky, from one waterhole to another.