

## Fantasy Creatures

by Anila Scott-Monkhouse

### Teacher's Notes

**Objective:** To practise all four skills, i.e. read a short passage on a fantasy creature; fill in a table to answer questions and speak from notes; listen to descriptions and make notes.

**Level:** Intermediate +

**Age:** Teenagers / adults

**Time:** 45 – 60 minutes

**Materials:** Make enough copies of the information sheet (i.e. description of creatures) so that each student has the description of one creature; cut along the dotted lines. Make one copy of the table per student.

### Procedure

1. Ask students if they know any names of fantasy/magical creatures and elicit anything else they know about them. Explain that they are going to read and exchange information about these kinds of creatures.
2. Give each student a copy of the table and a card with the description of one fantasy creature. Allow them time to read their card and make notes in the table. If there are more than 13 students, make more copies of the sheet and divide the class into groups. If there are less than 13 students, leave out some of the creatures and delete the names from the table. Otherwise, the students can ask the teacher for the information about any creature that is not assigned.
3. When they have finished writing notes about their creature, tell the students they must move around and ask each other questions about the fantasy creatures they know nothing about in order to fill in the table. If a student has already collected information on some other creature apart from the one on their card, they can pass it on. The students should be working in pairs / small groups which keep changing. The teacher's role is to monitor, coordinate and assist.
4. When they have completed the table, ask for class feedback to make sure everyone has filled in the table correctly.
5. (Optional) Ask students if they have discovered anything new/interesting/unusual, etc. and which creature they prefer / would like to

meet, etc. Ask if they have similar figures in their own culture. Ask if they recognize any figures from movies, books or computer games they know about (they should be able to quote *The Lord of the Rings*, *Shrek*, *Harry Potter*, *Dungeons and Dragons*). Introduce Halloween as a traditional festival with its costumes.

### Follow-up Activities

**Reading:** Read an extract from *The Lord of the Ring/Harry Potter* or a fairy tale e.g. by Enid Blyton, Hans Christian Andersen.

**Video:** Watch part or the whole of one of the *Shrek/ Harry Potter* films.

**Writing:** a) Students choose one or more of the creatures and invent their own fairy tale (which can be developed into drama). b) Students choose one creature and write a letter/email to it to get more information. c) Students imagine they are a creature of their choice and write a diary entry to describe their typical day / plan the following week / describe their weekend.

**Project work:** a) Students carry out research on mythological figures e.g. *unicorn, dragon, cyclop, mermaid*, etc., stereotypical fairytale characters e.g. *Prince Charming, Fairy Godmother, witch/wizard, giant*, etc. or contemporary myths and legends e.g. *Nessie, the Loch Ness Monster*. b) Students compare fantasy creatures to modern superheroes.

### CLIL:

**Music:** *The Fairy Garden* by Ravel, *Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy* by Tchaikovsky; *The Fairy's Kiss* by Stravinsky.

**Literature:** *The Faerie Queene* by Edmund Spenser, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Shakespeare (characters of Oberon and Titania), *Peter Pan* by J.M. Barrie (character of Tinker Bell).

**Botany:** The Fly Agaric (i.e. the red and white spotted mushroom associated with fairies).

**History:** The MacLeod clan and Dunvegan Castle on the Isle of Skye (legend of the magic flag).

**Art:** Victorian Fairy paintings; paintings and illustrations by Charles Robinson, Sophie Anderson, Cicely Mary Barker, Richard Doyle, Arthur Rackham, Charles Folkard, Mabel Lucie Attwell, Mildred Entwisle

**Arts and crafts:** Students draw the fantasy creatures, prepare outfits for Halloween or an end-of-the course fancy dress party / performance, etc.

### Alternatives

The texts can be simplified depending on the level of the students.

The teacher can provide a glossary, with either a simple definition in English, or a translation in the students' L1 (with a monolingual class). Otherwise, the teacher can pre-teach difficult/unknown lexis which might interfere with carrying out the activity.

## Motivation

Both teenage and adult students generally enjoy reading about fantasy creatures because it stimulates their imagination, provides a touch of nostalgia tied to their childhood days and gives a feel of the culture related to the language (i.e. legends and traditions). It also fits in with the current trend in books, movies and computer games.

## Approach

Task Based Learning.

It is a holistic activity, all skills are practised and it is non-threatening even for shy students.

All types of learners are catered for: the visual learner is stimulated by the layout of the table, the auditory learner by the listening and speaking involved, the kinaesthetic learner by the mingling section.

Both brain hemispheres are activated: the left hemisphere by summarising and organising information in a table, the right hemisphere by the topic itself and by the element of interaction.

## Sources

Alexander, M. *A Companion to the Folklore, Myths & Customs of Britain*, Sutton Publishing, 2002

Davis, J. *Fairies – The Pitkin Guide*, Jarrold Publishing, 2006

Wikipedia

Search engines (entering 'Fantasy creatures', 'fabulous creatures', 'mythology and folklore', 'creatures of imagination', 'unseen creatures' or the names of the creatures).

## Fantasy Creatures

Fantasy creature	What do they look like? <sup>1</sup>	What are they like? <sup>2</sup>	Where do they live?	What do they do? What can they do?	Other information
Brownies					
Dwarves					
Elves					
Gnomes					
Goblins					
Gremlins					
Hobbits					
Leprechauns					
Noble fairies					
Nymphs					
Ogres					
Pixies					
Trolls					

- 1) appearance
- 2) character and personality

## Fantasy Creatures

**Brownies:** They are hairy little brown creatures who live in farmhouses and other country buildings in Scotland and Northern England. While the people of the house are asleep, they do housework and jobs in the garden or on the farm. They wear ragged brown clothes but do not like any form of pity, and if their work is criticised they become very angry and destroy whatever they have done. Only children can see Brownies because of their innocent nature, but Brownies help adults too. They are helpful, loyal and protective creatures, but solitary too; they become attached to the family so if the family moves, the Brownies go with them, but if they are treated badly or offered payment (especially in the form of clothes) they vanish without trace.

**Dwarves:** They are short but powerfully built, with big hands and feet, and very long beards. They look old because they have a beard at the age of 7. Their homes are the caves and holes in the mountains of Scandinavia and Germany, where they mine for gems and precious metals which they make into extraordinarily beautiful jewellery and tools. They are creatures of the earth and darkness, and cannot appear above the ground during the day. They are very industrious, helpful and cheerful, and love to sing. At night, when everyone's asleep, they clean people's houses. They are very stubborn, unforgetting and take pride in their work. However, they are not always so good: they enjoy tripping people up and knocking glasses over at meal times.

**Elves:** They are tiny people who have formidable magical powers: they can change themselves into any shape they please and can disappear in a puff of smoke. They are creatures of the air and light. The females are young and beautiful, whilst the males are little old men. They live in the woods, in hollow logs. They have large hands and feet in comparison to the rest of the body, with very thin legs, pointed ears and noses, and a pale skin. They are tall and regal compared to other fairy creatures, and strong and agile compared to humans. They dress in green and build very refined weapons. They are unhappy little fairies and even when they dance, only very sad music is played. They love dancing on swords lit by moonlight. They are unreliable because they are helpful at times, and can even be dangerous at times.

**Gnomes:** They are very small old men with dark brown skin, white hair and a beard, and a pointed hat. They are smaller and less rotund than the dwarves their cousins, but have larger noses. They can live for 600 years. They are protectors of the natural world and look after gardens. They live underground in areas of rocky hill, well wooded and uninhabited by humans; if they are exposed to sunlight they immediately turn to stone. Because they are so small they are suspicious of the larger races (humans and elves) and very reserved and unsociable, but not hostile. They guard gold and other valuable objects (e.g. precious stones and jewellery) and are masters of gem polishing and cutting. They have a lively sense of humour, especially for practical jokes.

**Goblins:** They are small, ugly, thin and mischievous, with green skin and pointed ears. They are nomadic, living for short periods in caves or woodlands. They live in tribes, ride wolves in battles, and enjoy causing trouble and playing tricks (e.g. they visit kitchens and turn the cream sour, spill the milk, hide things or change signs to confuse humans). They are very fond of horses and small girls, but will pinch and beat naughty children. Halloween is traditionally the time when they can be seen by humans.

**Gremlins:** They are the most modern fantasy creatures, as they are spirits of tools and machinery and are responsible for mishaps and breakdowns with tools and equipment. They enter houses as occupants of household appliances. Originally they were friendly and helped engineers and inventors build things, but when these people took all the credit the Gremlins felt insulted and started to work against humans. They bite through cables, drink petrol when the supply is low, and move the runway when the plane is about to touch down. Although they are destructive, they can be helpful and intervene miraculously to solve situations.

**Hobbits:** They are approx. 1 metre tall and can live for up to 130 years (adult age is reached at 33); they have a round, jovial face, short, brown curly hair, pointed ears and large hairy feet. They wear green trousers, a red or yellow waistcoat, a brown or green jacket, a hood and a cloak, but no shoes. They are shy and enjoy an unadventurous bucolic life of farming, gardening, eating and socialising. They eat at least 7 meals a day and like simple food (e.g. bread, meat, potatoes, cheese), they love mushrooms, tobacco and beer. They give away gifts on their birthday, instead of receiving them. They live underground in hillsides and river banks, but also in brick and wooden houses with round doors and windows which recall the tunnels underground.

**Leprechauns:** The name 'leprechaun' is derived from an old Irish word which means 'little body'. Leprechauns live in Ireland, look like little old men and live alone in remote places such as farmhouses and wine cellars because they are solitary creatures. Leprechauns are happy fellows and dress in old-fashioned green clothes and wear a red cap. They spend their time making shoes for the Irish fairies and possess a lot of gold: a human who can capture a leprechaun will obtain the treasure.

**Noble fairies:** They are the most charming of all. These delicate creatures have beautifully coloured wings attached to their backs and fly about, weaving their magical spells. They are benevolent, full of love and sympathy, and friendly to humans, but humans rarely see them. Fairies tend to have specific purposes, for example the Tooth fairy collects children's teeth and exchanges them for coins; the Fairy Godmother instead is like a guardian angel. Fairies can sometimes be guides to lost people.

**Nymphs:** They live in secluded, peaceful places, close to a pure source of water. They are very beautiful, and hate evil and ugliness. They are peaceful and avoid conflict. If challenged, they use their magical powers to confuse their attacker and flee. They are forever young, full of charming grace and intelligence.

**Ogres:** They are twice as tall as humans and are strongly built with large muscles. They are not very intelligent, but they are neither stupid nor evil. They tend to rely on their physical strength rather than brains. They are good fighters and other races try to recruit them as mercenaries for armies as Ogres like fighting and will do it for money.

**Pixies:** They are handsome little creatures who live in the rocks of Cornwall and Devon (South of England); they have red hair, turned-up noses and dress in green. They are hardworking, and work in the fields all night for food. They are naughty because they pinch lazy people, steal babies and horses, and play tricks such as throwing objects around the house, leading night travellers astray and forcing those who see them dancing in the woods to join in and lose track of time. It is believed that wearing an item of clothing inside out will keep the pixies away.

**Trolls:** They are ugly, friendly little men with humped backs and crooked noses who wear grey jackets and red, pointed caps. They live in gold and crystal houses in caves in the hillsides of Scandinavia. They have a strange diet because they eat anything, including metal, bone, wood and rocks. They are not very intelligent and have the power to regenerate even if they are cut in two – the only way to stop a troll regenerating is by burning it. They have magical powers but never use them harmfully. They can predict the future and, by casting spells, make people rich. They guard treasures and are very skilled with their hands.