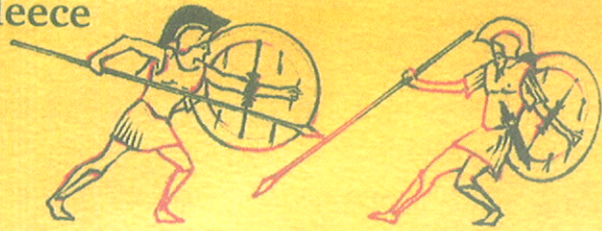


Jason and the Golden Fleece



Jason's father, a Greek king, has been killed by Pelias, Jason's evil brother. After Pelias takes over the kingdom, Jason is sent out of the country to live with Chiron, a wise centaur – half man and half horse. Chiron looks after Jason for many years and teaches him how to be strong, how to fight and how to be a leader.

When Jason was old enough, he returned to claim his throne, but his clever brother had thought of a plan to get rid of him. Pelias would not let Jason become king until he had found the Golden Fleece – a sheepskin made of pure gold. The Fleece was guarded by a huge snake and so was impossible to steal. To win his prize, Jason had to travel to Colchis, so he had a boat built by a man called Argos. The boat was called the Argo and when Jason collected together a group of fighters to go

with him on the quest, they were named Argonauts after their fine ship.

He and his crew had many heroic adventures on the way to Colchis. They were attacked by enormous six-armed monsters, they captured the harpies – cruel, winged monsters, escaped the furies of clashing rocks in the Greek seas, and were attacked by huge birds with bronze feathers. But all the time they were being protected by the Goddess Hera because Jason had helped her earlier in his life.

Eventually they arrived in Colchis, but the king there did not want to let go of the Golden Fleece. He pretended to be welcoming but he set Jason three tasks to show that he was fit to be the owner of the precious Fleece. Jason would not have succeeded in these if it had not been for the king's daughter, Medea,

who had fallen in love with him.

Jason's tasks were to attach two fierce bulls to a plough, to sow a field with seed and then gather in the crop that grew. Medea warned him that he was being tricked. The bulls her father would give him breathed fire, the seeds he had to sow were magical dragon's teeth and the crop that would grow would be an army of soldiers, who would kill him. But what could he do?

Medea gave him magic ointment. This would prevent him being burned by the bulls. He also carried a shiny shield so that the fire was reflected back at the bulls. The dragons' teeth would burn him so he wore gloves and he could fight the soldiers by himself because he was so strong.



TEXT

- 1 a) Who looked after Jason when he was a child? b) Why was he a strange choice?
c) What did he teach Jason?
- 2 Explain why Jason's warriors were called the 'Argonauts'.
- 3 Give three examples of adventures that the Argonauts had on their way to Colchis.
- 4 a) What were the three tasks given to Jason? b) Explain how he was tricked.
- 5 a) Show how he solved his three problems. b) Who helped him, and why?
- 6 Here are five features of legends. Find examples from the passage to illustrate them.
 - story takes place in the olden days
 - story has monsters
 - story has strong heroes
 - there are battles or fights
 - good wins in the end

SENTENCE

- 1 Which of these words would you use to describe a) someone you liked and b) someone you did not like? Say why.
graceful puny elegant dainty uncouth
handsome scrawny gloomy cheerful infantile
- 2 a) What two adjectives are used to describe Jason's brother?
b) Describe how they make you feel about him.
c) If the author had wanted you to feel the opposite, what words might he have used?
- 3 Find the evidence to prove that Jason is: brave, heroic, intelligent and strong.
- 4 Use these four pieces of information to write a paragraph which describes Jason. How would you twist the information to make him sound not so heroic?


WORD

- 1 Write out these sentences using the correct form and spelling of the words.
 - a) (There/their/they're) bikes were stolen yesterday.
 - b) "Never mind (who's/whose) bikes they (where/we're/were)," said the teacher, "I want to know if (there/they're/their insured)."
 - c) "(Its/it's) no good thinking of that now," said mum. "(There's/theirs) no excuse."
- 2 Write your own sentences using these pronouns:
them mine hers its yours theirs whose me
- 3 Write some rules for the class to explain when you use:
 - there, their or they're
 - where, were and we're
 - its and it's
 - whose and who's



In the Beginning and Pandora's Box

RETOLD BY GERALDINE MCCAUGHREAN



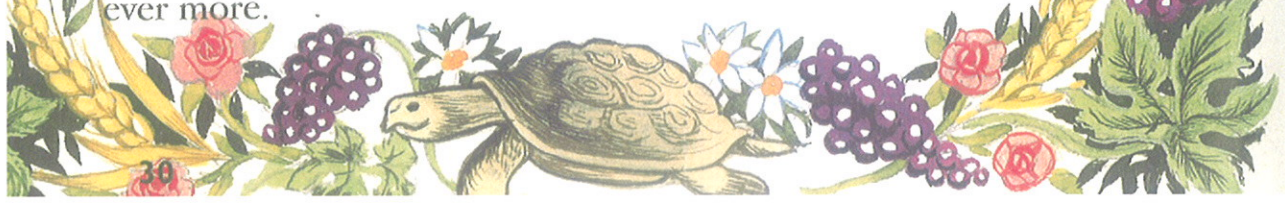
At the very beginning, the gods ruled over an empty world. From their home on Mount Olympus, where they lived in halls of sunlight and cloud, they looked out over oceans and islands, woodland and hill. But nothing moved in the landscape because there were no animals or birds or people.

Zeus, king of the gods, gave Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus the task of making living creatures, and he sent them down to live on earth. Epimetheus made turtles and gave them shells; he made horses and gave them tails and manes. He made anteaters and gave them long noses and longer tongues; he made birds and gave them the gift of flight. But although Epimetheus was a wonderful craftsman, he was not nearly as clever as his brother. So Prometheus watched over his brother's work and, when all the animals and birds, insects and fishes were made, it was Prometheus who made the very last creature of all. He took soil and mixed it into mud, and out of that he moulded First Man.

'I'll make him just like us gods – two legs, two arms and upright – not crawling on all fours. All the other beasts spend their days looking at the ground, but Man will look at the stars!'

When he had finished, Prometheus was very proud of what he had made. But when it came to giving Man a gift, there was nothing left to give!

Finally he decided to give man the gift of fire, but Zeus thought fire should be reserved for the gods alone. He was so angry with Prometheus that he tied him to a cliff for ever more.



Zeus was just as angry with Man for *accepting* the gift of fire, but you would never have thought so. He was busy making him another wonderful present.

With the help of the other gods, he shaped First Woman. Venus gave her beauty, Mercury gave her a clever tongue, Apollo taught her how to play sweet music. Finally Zeus draped a veil over her lovely head and named her Pandora.

Then, with a grin on his face, he sent for Epimetheus (who was not quite clever enough to suspect a trick).

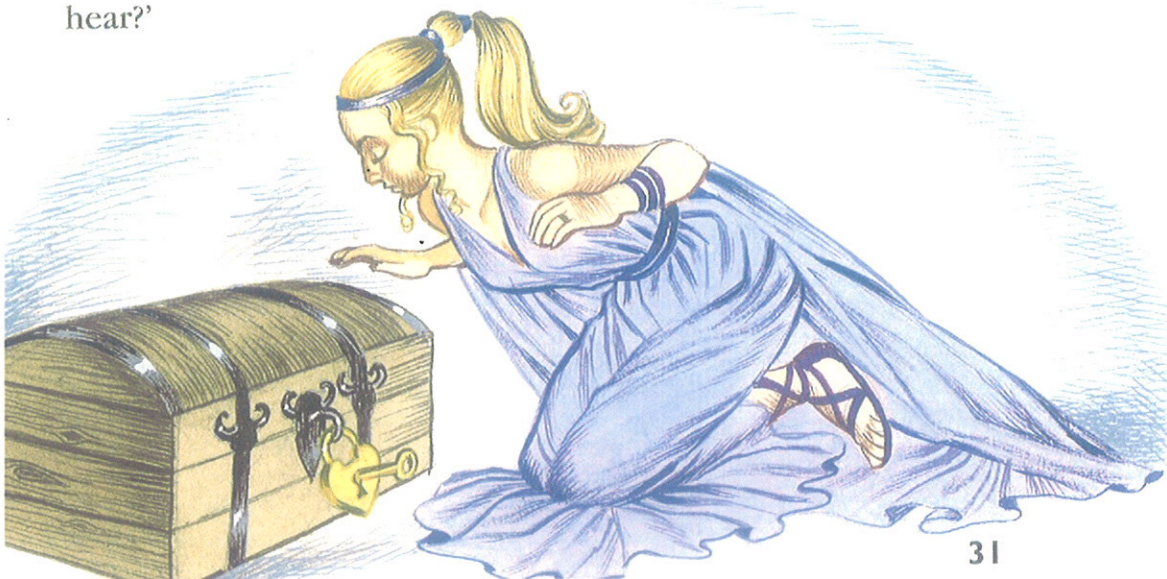
'Here's a bride for you, Epimetheus – a reward for all your hard work making the animals. And here's a wedding present for you both. But whatever you do, don't open it.'

The wedding present was a wooden chest, bolted and padlocked and bound with bands of iron. When he reached his home at the foot of Mount Olympus, Epimetheus set the chest down in a dark corner, covered it with a blanket, and put it out of his mind. After all, with Pandora for a bride, what more could a man possibly want?

In those days the world was a wonderful place to live. No one was sad. Nobody ever grew old or ill. And Epimetheus married Pandora; she came to live in his house, and everything she wanted he gave her.

But sometimes, when she caught sight of the chest, Pandora would say, 'What a strange wedding present. Why can't we open it?'

'Never mind why. Remember, you must never touch it,' Epimetheus would reply sharply. 'Not touch at all. Do you hear?'



'Of course I won't touch it. It's only an old chest. What do I want with an old chest? ... What do you think is inside?'

60 'Never mind what's inside. Put it out of your mind.'

And Pandora did try. She really did. But one day, when Epimetheus was out, she just could not forget about the chest and somehow she found herself standing right beside it.

'No!' she told herself. 'I expect it's full of cloth – or dishes – or papers. Something dull.' She bustled about the house. She tried to read. Then ...

'*Let us out!*'

'Who said that?'

'Do let us out, Pandora!'

70 Pandora looked out of the window. But in her heart of hearts she knew that the voice was coming from the chest. She pulled back the blanket with finger and thumb. The voice was louder now: 'Please, please *do* let us out, Pandora!'

'I can't. I mustn't.' She crouched down beside the chest.

'Oh, but you *have* to. We *want* you to. We *need* you to, Pandora!'

'But I promised!' Her fingers stroked the latch.

'It's easy. The key's in the lock,' said the little voice – a purring little voice.

80 It was. A big golden key.

'No. No, I mustn't,' she told herself.

'But you do *want* to, Pandora. And why shouldn't you? It was your wedding present too, wasn't it? ... Oh, all right, don't let us out. Just peep inside. What harm can that do?'

Pandora's heart beat faster.

Click. The key turned.

Clack. Clack. The latches were unlatched.

BANG!

90 The lid flew back and Pandora was knocked over by an icy wind full of grit. It filled the room with howling. It tore the curtains and stained them brown. And after the wind came slimy things, growling snarling things, claws and snouts, revolting things too nasty to look at, all slithering out of the chest.

'I'm Disease,' said one.
 'I'm Cruelty,' said another.
 'I'm Pain, and she's Old Age.'
 'I'm Disappointment and he's Hate.'
 'I'm Jealousy and that one there is War.'
 100 'AND I AM DEATH!' said the smallest purring voice.

The creatures leapt and scuttled and oozed out through the windows, and at once all the flowers shrivelled, and the fruit on the trees grew mouldy. The sky itself turned a filthy yellow, and the sound of crying filled the town.

Mustering all her strength, Pandora slammed down the lid of the chest. But there was one creature inside.

'No, no, Pandora! If you shut me inside, that will be your worst mistake of all! Let me go!'

'Oh no! You don't fool me twice,' sobbed Pandora.

110 'But I am Hope!' whispered the little voice faintly. 'Without me the world won't be able to bear all the unhappiness you have turned loose!'

So Pandora lifted the lid, and a white flicker, small as a butterfly, flitted out and was blown this way and that by the howling winds. And as it fluttered through the open window, a watery sun came out and shone on the wilted garden.

Illustrated by Joan Martin May



JOAN
MARTIN
MAY

Name _____

Date _____



In the beginning

Read the myth and answer these questions.

1 What did Pandora let out of the box?

2 What was the world like before and after Pandora opened the box?

3 Who do you think Zeus was playing a trick on? Why?

4 Why was it a punishment to give Pandora to Epimetheus?

5 What do you think this myth is trying to explain?

How Night Came to the World

A story from the Amazon rainforest of Brazil

RETOLD BY SEAN TAYLOR

People say that many, many years ago at the very beginning of the world, there were no animals, no birds, no fish. And, what's more, there was no night. The sun never stopped shining. It was always day.

Anyway, at that time there was a Great Snake who lived in a cave on the banks of the River Amazon and she had a daughter. This daughter was very beautiful, very magical, and she was married to the son of a village chief. But because there was no night, this husband of hers could never sleep. He tossed, he turned, he sat up in his hammock, he lay down again, but he could not sleep a wink.

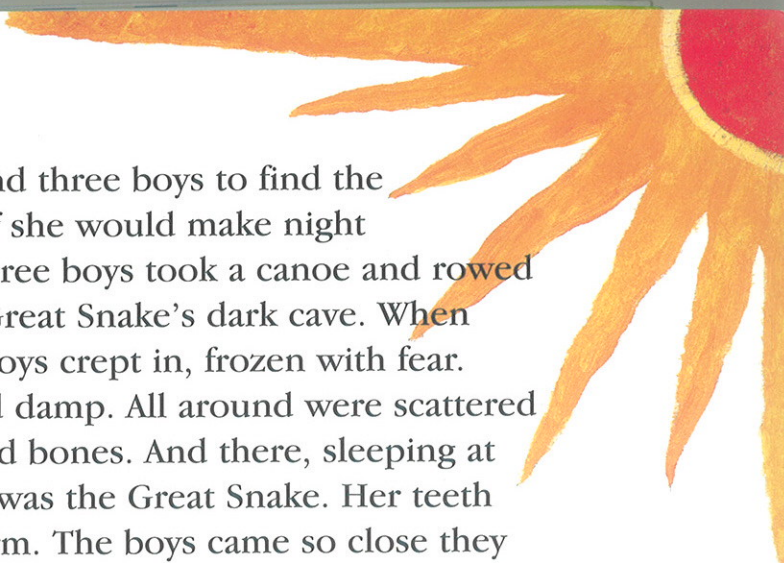
'Ai! Ai! Ai!' shouted the husband one day, 'It's too hot. It's too bright. How are we meant to sleep?'

'Calm yourself,' said his wife. 'We'll be able to sleep only when the first night comes to the world.'

'Well isn't there some way we can make this first night come to the world?'

His wife said, 'Night exists, but it is at the bottom of the River Amazon. Only my mother, the Great Snake, knows where.'





So, they decided to send three boys to find the Great Snake and ask her if she would make night come to the world. The three boys took a canoe and rowed up the river towards the Great Snake's dark cave. When they got to the cave, the boys crept in, frozen with fear.

The cave was deep and damp. All around were scattered broken canoes and chewed bones. And there, sleeping at the very back of the cave, was the Great Snake. Her teeth were as long as a man's arm. The boys came so close they could feel the snake's breath warm on their faces.

'What is it?' she asked.

'Erm ...' said the first boy. 'Are you the Great Snake?'

'Well who do you think I am? The Little Canary? Of course I'm the Great Snake. Now what do you want?'

'Well,' said the second boy, 'your son-in-law can't sleep. So your daughter, she sent us to see if maybe, well, perhaps ... perhaps ...'

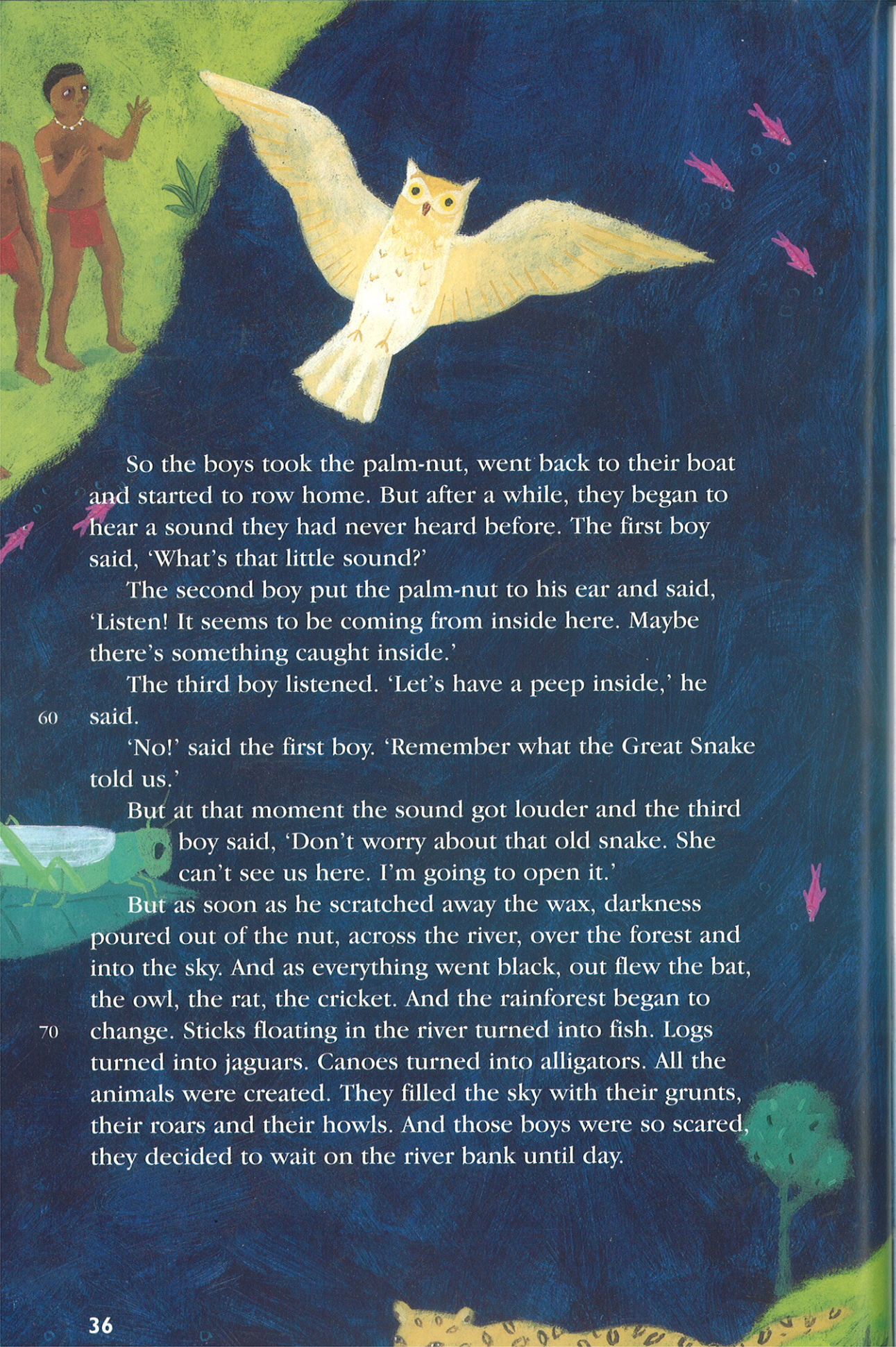
'Perhaps *what*, boy?' hissed the Great Snake. 'Speak up!'

'Perhaps you know how to make night come to the world,' said the third boy.

The Great Snake whispered, 'Of course I know how to make night come to the world.'

Then her great, thick body uncoiled past the boys, dropped down into the river and disappeared. In a few moments she was back, and in her mouth was a *tucumã* palm-nut, sealed at one end with yellow wax. 'Take this,' she said, giving the palm-nut to the first boy. 'This is what my daughter wants. But be careful with it. Don't drop it. Don't do anything silly or your journey will be wasted. Now disappear.'





So the boys took the palm-nut, went back to their boat and started to row home. But after a while, they began to hear a sound they had never heard before. The first boy said, 'What's that little sound?'

The second boy put the palm-nut to his ear and said, 'Listen! It seems to be coming from inside here. Maybe there's something caught inside.'

60 The third boy listened. 'Let's have a peep inside,' he said.

'No!' said the first boy. 'Remember what the Great Snake told us.'

But at that moment the sound got louder and the third boy said, 'Don't worry about that old snake. She can't see us here. I'm going to open it.'

70 But as soon as he scratched away the wax, darkness poured out of the nut, across the river, over the forest and into the sky. And as everything went black, out flew the bat, the owl, the rat, the cricket. And the rainforest began to change. Sticks floating in the river turned into fish. Logs turned into jaguars. Canoes turned into alligators. All the animals were created. They filled the sky with their grunts, their roars and their howls. And those boys were so scared, they decided to wait on the river bank until day.

Meanwhile, back where they had come from, the Great Snake's daughter looked up into the black sky.

'Ai, ai, ai,' she muttered. 'Those boys have let out the night too soon.'

'Come and sleep!' called her husband.

80 But she shook her head. 'No. Now I have to find a way to make the night share the world with the day.'

She pulled out one of her hairs, found a twig and wrapped the hair carefully around it. She mixed different coloured paints from clay and berries. Then she painted the twig white and red, threw it in the air and it turned into a *cujubim* – the bird that calls for the day. The *cujubim* flew away into the forest.

90 She took another hair, another twig, painted them grey, threw them in the air and it turned into an *inhambu*, the bird that calls for the night. The *inhambu* flew away into the forest. Then, in the same way, she created the parrot, the egret, the humming-bird, the toucan and all the birds of the forest. She said, 'Some of these birds will call for the night, and some of them will call for the day. And that way, day and night will share the world.'

Then the morning birds began to sing. The sun started to rise and night went to sleep at the bottom of the River Amazon.

100 It wasn't long before the three boys were back. The Great Snake's daughter was furious. 'Look!' she said. 'You have yellow wax on your hands! You opened the palm-nut! You stuck your noses into something that was none of your business. And because of that you are going to jump from tree to tree for the rest of time!'

And with that she transformed them into the only animal that still had not been created. And that is why, until today, monkeys have waxy yellow hands. And that is why monkeys shriek every night when it starts to get dark. So that is how night first came to the world and that is how the story ends.

Name _____

Date _____



How Night Came to the World

Read the myth and answer these questions.

1 Where did the Great Snake get the palm-nut from?

.....
.....

2 How did the Great Snake's daughter make the night share the world with the day?

.....
.....
.....

3 Why do you think there were broken canoes and chewed bones in the Great Snake's cave?

.....
.....
.....



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Storm Bringer

What is being explained?

Thunder/lightning/rain

Characters

Great Mother in the sky

Big Brother in the sky

Little Brother in the sky

Setting

The world long ago

Complication

The brothers' refusal to help their mother

Results

Mother gets cross and bangs about

Messages/morals

Losing your temper can make things go wrong

Name _____

Date _____



Planning grid

What is being explained?

Characters

Setting

Complication

Results

Messages/morals



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