

Maps, Myths, and Monsters



Completed By: _____

Introduction

When Sebastian Munster was making maps in the early 1500s, he wanted to include pictures of people and animals from far away. But Munster didn't have photographs or the internet to help him-- instead he had to rely on stories from explorers and very old books for his information.

Munster lived during a time period we call the Renaissance, which lasted from about 1450 to 1600. Europe was discovering a lot about the world during the Renaissance, but there was still a lot that they misunderstood.

Directions:

Find the following images of mythical characters and creatures on the Renaissance maps and illustrations provided. Make sure to note the item numbers when you find the images.

Part One: Myths

Myths are stories that include supernatural beings or events in order to explain how nature, ideas, or practices came into existence.

Medieval Myths

In the Middle Ages, people were taught to believe that the only source of truth was the Catholic Church. Even though map people during the Renaissance began to believe that science and logic were the keys to knowledge, many medieval myths were still widely accepted.

1. If you asked most Europeans during the Middle Ages how human beings came to exist, they would likely tell you the story of Adam and Eve, found in the Book of Genesis, which is included in the Bible. According to Genesis, the first man, Adam was created from dust by god. The first woman, Eve, was created from a rib of Adams. In the Medieval worldview, all human beings are descendants of Adam. Find this image of Adam and Eve. What item is it found on?



2. According to Genesis, Adam and Eve were kicked out of the Garden of Eden, where they did not have to have to work for food, after they ate of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Many medieval Europeans believed that the Garden of Eden was hidden in the Far East. Find this image of the Garden of Eden. What item is it found on?

3



3. Europeans in the Middle Ages only knew about three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe. According to Genesis, the entire world was killed in a flood, except for a man named Noah, his three sons, and their wives. A medieval scholar, the Venerable Bede, wrote that Europe was settled by Noah's son, Japheth, while Africa was settled by his son, Cham (or Ham). Shem (or Sem), the third son, settled Asia. God's chosen people, the Israelites, descended from Sem. Find this image of Sem. What item is it found on?

1



4. One medieval myth stated that a lost tribe of Israel still wandered the earth. According to prophecies, all of the tribes of Israel will be gathered together in the Holy Land (Palestine) near the end of the Earth. When explorers encountered Native Americans in the New World, many felt certain that they were actually a lost tribe of Israel. Find this list of Sem's descendants in the New World. What item is it found on?

5

אַבְרָהָם	17	Abimael
שָׁבָא	18	Seba
אָוָהָרָן	19	Ophir
חִוִּילָה	20	Hauilah
Duo ex filiis IERTAN.		
יְהָבָב	21	Iobab gentes
סָפָר	22	Sephermos

5. Because Jerusalem was considered Holy, medieval Europeans fought several wars for the Holy Land (including Jerusalem) with Islamic Turks. These wars are known today as the Crusades. Jerusalem was often pictured at the center of medieval maps. Find this image of Jerusalem. What item is it found on?

12



6. Europeans during the Crusades believed that they would receive help from an Ethiopian king, Prester John, who was supposedly a Christian ruler of a large nation in Africa. Even during the Crusades, legends about Prester John had already been around for hundreds of years. While there are some theories that he may be based on a 1st century Christian in Syria, no one knows for sure where the legend of Prester John came from. Find this image of Prester John. What item is it found on?

16



Classical Myths

When the city of Constantinople was captured in 1453, many of the old books from the Greeks and Romans were sent to Rome to keep them safe. Europeans had never read many of the books, and they were amazed by the knowledge of the classical (Greek or Roman) writers. Classical culture became very popular throughout Europe, and mapmakers often put images of Roman myths on their maps.

7. In Roman mythology, three gods ruled different parts of nature. While Neptune had power over the sea and Pluto ruled the underworld, Jupiter was god of the sky. Thought to control weather, he is often pictured holding lighting bolts. Find this image of Jupiter. What item is it found on?

9



8. While he didn't control the underworld or the sea, Jupiter was the most powerful of the three rulers. Often considered "king of the gods," Jupiter is usually pictured wearing a crown. Occasionally, his wife, Juno, is also pictured with him. Find this image of Jupiter and Juno. What item is it found on?

8



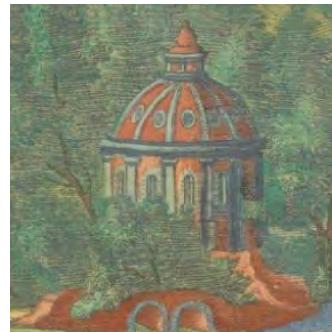
9. The Greeks and Romans built elaborate structures in honor of their gods. This gold statue of Jupiter was considered one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. Find this image of Jupiter's statue. What item is it found on?

10



10. Jupiter's statue is found in the Vale of Tempe, next to Mount Olympus, where the gods were thought to live. Find this image of Jupiter's temple. What item is it found on?

20



11. Neptune is the god of the seas. He is often shown holding a fisherman's spear, called a trident. He was served by Tritons and Nereids, the Roman name for mermen and mermaids. Find this image of Neptune. What item is it found on?

8



12. Ceres is the earth goddess, and is usually shown wearing or holding wheat. She was the god who most symbolized summer. The most famous story about her involves the kidnapping of her daughter, Persephone. When Pluto, god of the Underworld, captured Ceres' only daughter, Ceres grew distraught and caused a severe famine across the land. Find this image of Ceres. What item is it found on?

9



13. Apollo is the god of music. He is also considered the "sun god." While he is the son of Jupiter, Apollo's mother was Jupiter's mistress and not his wife, Juno. Apollo spent many years trying to escape Juno, who was trying to have him killed. Find this image of Apollo. What item is it found on?

10



14. Bacchus is the god of wine. Because winemaking was done in the fall, he came to symbolize autumn. He is usually shown holding grapes and accompanied by Satyrs, half-goat people. Find this image of Bacchus. What item is it found on?

9



15. Venus is the goddess of beauty. She is often shown with swans, and is usually accompanied by Cupid, who some Romans thought was her son. Venus possessed a belt that made the wearer irresistible, and even lent it out to Juno so she could distract Jupiter from the Trojan War. Find this image of Venus. What item is it found on?

10



16. Flora is the goddess of flowers. Symbolizing spring, she is often shown holding bouquets. In one story about her, the West Wind, Zephyrus, fell in love with her and followed her everywhere she went. She distracted him by scattering flowers behind her.

9



17. Pluto is the god of the underworld. He is best known for kidnapping his own niece, Persephone, and trying to make her marry him.

8



18. Mars is the god of war, and is usually shown with a shield and sword. The Romans believed that Juno became pregnant with Mars by eating a magical flower in order to get back at Jupiter for having so many children with other goddesses. In mythology, Mars' son, Romulus, founded the city of Rome. Find this image of Mars. What item is it found on?

9



19. Saturn is best known for being the father of Jupiter. He is often pictured with a scythe because he used one to attack his own father, Uranus, at the request of his mother. Find this image of Saturn. What item is it on?

9



20. Even though Jupiter was considered the king of gods, he was not the oldest. Saturn is his father, and three of the gods listed above are his siblings. Determine which three with help from the following clues:

Ceres, Pluto, Neptune

- Persephone is Jupiter's niece.
- Jupiter's own brother kidnapped Persephone.
- Jupiter agreed to ruling the sky while his brother ruled the sea.

Part Two: Monsters

Part of the reason that Europeans were so impressed with classical writers was the knowledge the Romans had of amazing people and animals in far away parts of the world. One very important book to medieval and Renaissance scholars was the large encyclopedia by Pliny the Elder, which included many descriptions of what we would consider monsters today.

Humanoid Monsters

During the Middle Ages, people believed that humans could have children with animals, but that the children would be monsters. They also believed that strange “races” existed in the remote parts of the world.

1. According to classical writers, such as Pliny the Elder, a tribe of humanoids could be found in Africa with giant lips that could be pulled up over their heads to provide shade. While the Romans called this race of humanoid “Amyctyrae,” they were probably based on a real group of Africans, the Ubangi, whose women extend their lips by placing plates inside the skin.

2



2. Another tribe found in Africa was the Cynocephali. According to many classical writers, the Cynocephali had the bodies of humans, only covered in hair, and a face that resembles a dog’s. Known to live on raw meat, they used a language that sounded like dog’s barking. When reading the early accounts about the Cynocephali, it becomes clear that the Greeks and Romans were mistaking African baboons to be a tribe of humans. Find this image of a Cynocephali. What item is it found on?

18



3. Satyrs were thought to be the children of humans and goats. With the head and torso of a human, and the legs and feet of a goat, Satyrs lived in the wild and loved to drink wine. Find this image of a Satyr. What item is it found on?

16



4. The Blemmyae was another race of humanoids thought to exist in the remote parts of the world. They had no head, and their faces were found on their chest. Even Shakespeare mentions the Blemmyae in one of his plays. Find this image of a Blemmyae. What item is it found on?

18



5. When explorers returned from South America, there were reports of Blemmyae living in the inner parts of the continent. Find this image of South American Blemmyae. What item is it found on?

6



6. Mermaids were another kind of humanoid thought to exist. The Romans called them "Nereids." Interestingly, many medieval pictures of mermaids show them having two tails rather than just one. Find this image of a Nereid. What item is it found on?

2



7. Mermen were also thought to exist. They were called Tritons. Find this image of a Triton. What item is it found on?

8



8. Centaurs were another kind of humanoid that many people during the Middle Ages thought existed. Like a Satyr, Centaurs were human from the waist up. Below the waist, they were horses. Find this image of a centaur. What item is it found on?

1



9. Many cultures have stories about fairies. While some believe that they are souls of the dead, others associate them with nature. Find this image of fairies. What item is it found on?

15



Animalistic Monsters

Europeans were fascinated with exotic animals, such as elephants and lions. Although it was very rare for a Medieval European to see an elephant or lion in his life, many classical writers describe them. Those same writers included descriptions of other fantastic animals, like dragons and unicorns.

10. Dragons were one of the fiercest monsters according to Medieval lore. In southern Europe, dragons were often thought to have the ability to fly and breathe fire. Find this image of dragons. What item is it found on?

3



11. While these creatures don't look like the dragons we're used to seeing, this is how people in England thought of dragons. Called "amphiptere," this dragon can fly, but has no legs. Find this image of an amphiptere. What item is it found on?

2



12. Unicorns are another well-known medieval monster. Their horns were thought to contain magical properties. Find this image of a unicorn. What item is it found on?

17



13. The Phoenix is a mythical bird that is said to burn up every 500 years. From the ashes, another Phoenix is produced. Find this image of a Phoenix. What item is it found on?

3



14. Europeans believed that many of the exotic animals and races lived in remote parts of the world. It was thought, at the time, that a large southern continent must exist in order to balance out the earth's rotation. It seemed likely that the more rare animals would be found on this southern continent, called Terra Australis. Find this description of Terra Australis. What item is it found on?

7



15. One map showing Terra Australis includes an image of a unicorn. Find this image. What item is it found on?

4



Sea Monsters

Belief in sea monsters persisted in Europe for a very long time. Some people even believed that sea monsters controlled the weather! Even though believing in sea monsters seems strange to us today, a lot of sea monsters were based on real animals.

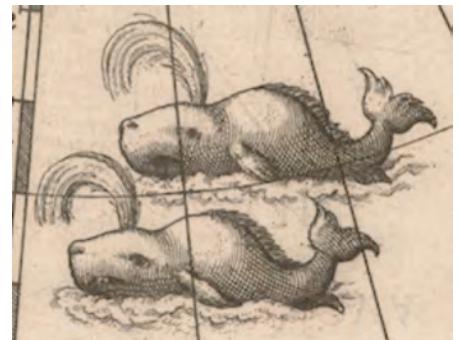
16. This funny-looking sea monster is a whale! Clearly, the artist got a few details wrong.

14



17. In fact, it was not until almost 1600 that we see an almost-accurate image of whales.

13



18. According to legend that accompanied the map including this creature, the "Nahual" has a long, pointed tooth that extends 10 feet beyond his mouth. This creature is probably based on the real Arctic animal, the Narwhal. Find this image of a Nahual. What item is it found on?

14



19. One popular story during the Middle Ages tells of a monk who was exploring the Atlantic ocean. St. Brenden and his men made camp on an island only to discover that they were camping on the back of a giant sea creature, which they named the Fish of Satan. Find this image of the Fish of Satan. What item is it found on?

19



20. Many medieval Europeans believed that all land animals had a counterpart in the sea. For example, some mapmakers included "sea bulls" on their maps. Find this image of sea bulls. What item is it found on?

14



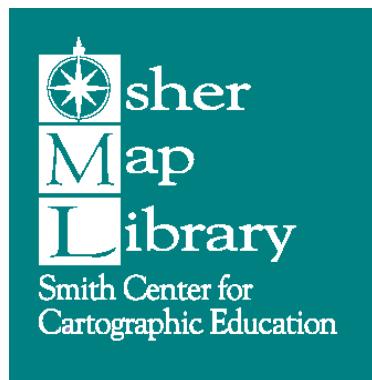
Bonus: What other sea creatures can you find that look like land animals?

(will vary, but several examples on item 14, including a monster with a lion's mane, a snout-nosed pig-like monster, a seahorse, etc)

Item List

Item 1:	Hartmann Schedel	1493	www.oshermaps.org/map/7324.0072c
Item 2:	Sebastian Munster	1555	www.oshermaps.org/map/262.0001
Item 3:	Anonymous	1551	www.oshermaps.org/7335.0148c
Item 4:	Paulo Forlani	1562	www.oshermaps.org/map/277.0001
Item 5:	Montano Arias	1571	www.oshermaps.org/map/1650.0001
Item 6:	Franz Ritter	1640	www.oshermaps.org/map/419.0001
Item 7:	John Speed	1651	www.oshermaps.org/map/1734.0001
Item 8:	Nicolas Visscher	1658	www.oshermaps.org/map/446.0001
Item 9:	Joan Blaeu	1662	www.oshermaps.org/map/458.0001
Item 10:	Moses Pitt	1680	www.oshermaps.org/map/505.0001
Item 11:	Gerard Valck	1695	www.oshermaps.org/map/1789.0001
Item 12:	Anonymous	1475	www.oshermaps.org/map/233.0001
Item 13:	William Barents	1598	www.oshermaps.org/map/341.0001
Item 14:	Abraham Ortelius	1602	www.oshermaps.org/map/352.0001
Item 15:	Willem Blaeu	1630	www.oshermaps.org/map/386.0001
Item 16:	Gerard Mercator	1633	www.oshermaps.org/map/394.0001
Item 17:	Bernard Breydenbach	1486	www.oshermaps.org/map/236.0002
Item 18:	Hartmann Schedel	1493	www.oshermaps.org/map/7324.0071
Item 19:	Sebastian Munster	1550	www.oshermaps.org/map/260.0001
Item 20:	Abraham Ortelius	1595	www.oshermaps.org/7348.0618c

* Items can be viewed digitally at the URLs above



www.oshermaps.org

Cover Image:

Abraham Ortelius, "Islandia" from *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, Antwerp 1595
OML Accession: OS-1595-1