

Unit 9

Myths and Literature



Objectives

After the completion of this unit, you will –

- be introduced with various kinds of mythical stories.
- be familiarized with Jibanananda Das's styles of writing.
- know how Jibanananda Das has used Bengali ways of life in his poem.

Overview

Lesson 1: Bengal's Face

Lesson 2: Orpheus

Lesson 3: The Legend of Gazi

Lesson 4 : Hercules



Answer Key

Lesson 1 : Bengal's Face



1. Warm-up activity:

- Myths are ancient stories that have become very popular and ideal. Look at the above mythical pictures and try to compare them with any mythological stories you heard from your parents or grandparents in your childhood.



2. Now read the following poem by Jibanananda Das (1899-1954) in an English translation and then attempt to answer the questions that follow either by responding to your classroom teacher in English or by trying to write down answers in your notebook.

I Have Seen Bengal's Face*

Because I have seen Bengal's face I will seek no more;
The world has not anything more beautiful to show me.
Waking up in darkness, gazing at the fig-tree, I behold
Dawn's swallows roosting under huge umbrella-like leaves. I look around me
And discover a leafy dome-Jam, Kanthal, Bat, Hijol and Aswatha trees-
All in a hush, shadowing clumps of cactus and zedoary bushes.
When long, long ago, Chand came in his honeycombed boat
To a blue Hijal, Bat and Tamal shade near the Champa, he too sighted
Bengal's incomparable beauty. One day, alas. In the Ganguri,
On a raft, as the waning moon sank on the river's sandbanks,
Behula too saw countless aswaths bats besides golden rice fields
And heard the thrush's soft song. One day, arriving in Amara,
Where gods held court, when she danced like a desolate wagtail,
Bengal's rivers, fields, flowers, wailed like strings of bells on her feet.

*Translation of Jibanananda Das's "Banglar Mukh Ami Dekhiyachhi" by Fakrul Alam

3. Write down what you have guessed about the meaning of each of the following words from the context in which they have been used:

behold
 fig tree
 roosting
 dome
 hush
 honeycombed
 waning
 desolate
 wagtail
 wailed.

Now consult a dictionary or search Google for the words to see if you have guessed the meanings of the words correctly.

4. Discuss the following questions with members of your group and carry on the discussion in English as far as possible:

- a. Have you heard about Chand Saudagar and Behula before? If so, in what context? Where is Ganguri and Amara?
- b. Discuss with your class friends the Manasa Mangal medieval epic. Do you know of any modern Bengali versions of this epic?
- c. Look up the story of Behula and Chand Saudagar from Wikipedia or Banglapedia. Make a summary in about 200-250 words.
- d. How and why does Jibanananda Das use this mythical story in his poem?
- e. The poem has fourteen lines and is divided into two thematic sections. What are such poems called in English and in Bangla?

5. Which of the following statements seem to be false and which true?

write 'T' or 'F' after each statement to register your response:

- a. The speaker saw the scene that he describes in his poem from a boat.
- b. The scene that he came across was noisy.
- c. Both Behula and Chand sailed down the river in a boat.
- d. The scene described in the second half of the poem is a very sad one.
- e. The poem is about a Bengal that is no more.

6. Identify the parts of speech of the following words:

leafy (line 5); sighted (line 8); incomparable (line 9); besides (line 11); wagtail (line 13); strings (line 14).

7. Write down each answer in about 300 words:

- a. What connection can you make among the speaker of the poem, the scene that he sees before him and the story of Behula and Chand?
- b. Line 9 offers a new idea and divides the poem into two. What, do you think, are the connections between the two sections?
- c. Why does the poet use the medieval Bengali legend in his poem?

8. Write on what other Bengali myths do you know about?

9. Follow-up activity: Group Presentation

The Bangla poem first appeared in Jibanananda Das's collection of poems called Ruposhi Bangla, or in English, "Beautiful Bengal." As a group, find out more information about the poet, the book of poems, and its publication history and make group presentations on these topics in the next class in English.

Lesson 2 : Orpheus



1. Warm-up activity:

Discuss the following questions:

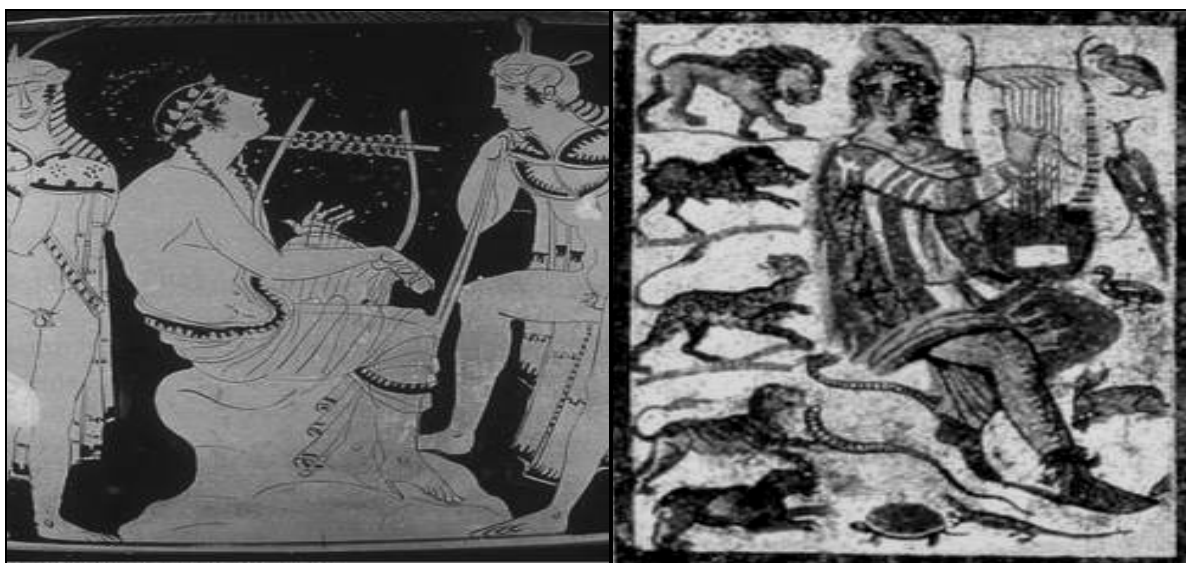
- Have you read Kazi Nazrul Islam's "Bidrohi" in Bengali? If so, did you find the use of any myths in the poem? If not, consider it your homework. Read "Bidrohi" at home for discussion in class later.
- Were any of the myths associated with music and a musician?



2. Read the following passage and fill in each gap with an appropriate word from the list of options below:

Orpheus was the son of Apollo and the Muse Calliope. He was presented by his father with a lyre and taught to (i).....upon it, which he did to such perfection that nothing could withstand the (ii)..... of his music. Not only his fellow-mortals, but (iii)..... animals were softened by his music. The very trees and rocks were charmed by him. The former crowded (iv)..... him and the latter relaxed somewhat of (v)..... hardness, softened by his notes.

- | | | | | |
|------|----------|----------|------------|-----------------|
| i. | a) drum | b) play | c) jump | d) disco |
| ii. | a) charm | b) peace | c) silence | d) satisfaction |
| iii. | a) tame | b) wild | c) rough | d) regular |
| iv. | a) on | b) for | c) around | d) below |
| v. | a) the | b) their | c) these | d) that |



3. Answer the following questions:

- Who were Orpheus's parents?
- What is Orpheus famous for?
- What was the impact of his music on human beings and animals?
- How did animals react to it?
- What would be a suitable title for this passage?

4. Discuss the following with your friend:

- Importance of music in your life.
- Your favourite music.
- Your favourite singers/bands.
- Your favourite musical programmes.

5. Match the words in Column A with the appropriate words in Column B:

Column A	Column B
a. play	i. a guitar
b. perform	ii. in an orchestra
c. sing	iii. a horn
d. blow	iv. a song
e. strum	v. the drums

Lesson 3 : The Legend of Gazi

1. Warm-up activity:

- Folk art means artistic presentation of local myths. This type of art is also called indigenous art. Try to give some examples of folk art that you have seen.
- What is meant by indigenous art?



2. Now read the following text and answer the questions that follow:

The Legend of Gazi

According to some myths and legends, Gazi Pir was a Muslim saint who is said to have spread Islam in the parts of Bengal close to the Sunderbans. He was credited with many miracles.



For example, he could supposedly calm dangerous animals and make them docile. He is usually depicted in paatsor scroll paintings riding a fierce-looking Bengal tiger, a snake in his hand, but in no apparent danger. According to some stories, he also fought crocodiles who threatened the people of a region full of canals and creeks, indeed, a kind of watery jungle bordering the Bay of Bengal. Because of his alert and vigilant presence, all predatory animals were said to have been kept within bounds. It was also believed that he enabled villagers to live close to forests and

jungles and cultivate their lands. Consequently, people of these regions would pray to him for protection. The story of Gazi Pir has been preserved in folk literature as well as art and has been performed in indigenous theatre. In fact, some Gazir paat scrolls are part of the collection of the British Museum.

3. Which of the following statements is true and which one is false. Correct the false one(s).

- a. Gazi was admired for his miracles.
- b. Gazi is followed by people in all parts of Bangladesh.
- c. Gazi lived near the Sundarbans.
- d. Gazi's works are presented in folk art.
- e. German Museum keeps GaziPir's art.

4. Find out the meaning of the following words:

- a. legend
- b. docile
- c. protection
- d. creek
- e. vigilant
- f. predatory
- g. collection

5. Answer the following questions:

- a. According to some myths and legends, what kind of extraordinary power did Gazihave?
- b. What was the geographical nature of the region where Gazi performed his miracles?
- c. Why, do you think, was Gazi admired in parts of rural Bangladesh for a longtime?
- d. What are the different art forms in which the myth of Gazi is kept alive in Bangladesh and even outside the country?

6. There are many linking words in English such as 'for example', 'also', 'indeed', 'consequently' and 'in fact'. Can you give some more examples?

7. Write a paragraph of about 150 words describing your personal experience of some forms of folk art.

Lesson 4: Hercules



1. Warm-up activity:

- Hercules is a myth. He was famous for his extra-ordinary courage. Browse the internet to know more about him. You may also watch the film “The Legends of Hercules”.
- What do you mean by saying ‘He is like Hercules’?
- Do you know of other heroes who have comparable stories — either through your reading or from watching films and television?



2. Read the following passage about Hercules and answer the questions that follow:

Hercules was the son of Jupiter and Alcmena. Eurystheus, the King of Mycenae and his cousin, made him undergo some difficult tasks, which are known in Greek myths as the 'twelve labours of Hercules.' The first involved a fight with a lion. The valley of Nemea was being disturbed by a terrible lion and so Eurystheus ordered Hercules to slay the beast and bring him his skin. At first, Hercules tried to fight the lion with his club and arrows but this took him nowhere. Then Hercules attempted a different tactic: he decided he would use his hands. He thus managed to slay the animal on his own, relying entirely on his immense strength. Victorious, he returned to Mycenae carrying the dead lion on his shoulders, a sight that terrified the King.

His next task was to slay a monster called Hydra that was ravaging the country of Argos. The Hydra had nine heads, of which the middle one was said to be immortal. Our hero struck off its heads with his club, but whenever he knocked off a head, two new ones erupted in its place. Eventually with the help of his devoted servant Iolaus, Hercules succeeded in burning all the heads of the Hydra except the ninth or immortal one, which he decided to bury under a huge rock. In other words, Hercules triumphed again, as he would every time he was given an impossible task by Eurystheus! And this is how he began to acquire the reputation of a hero possessing immense strength throughout the world.



- 3. Write the meanings of the following phrases and make sentences with them:**
- had to undergo
 - involved a fight with
 - took him nowhere
 - a different tactic
 - entirely on his own
 - a sight
 - succeeded in ,
 - acquire a reputation
- 4. Which of the following statements seem to be false and which true? Write 'T' or 'F' after each statement to register your response.**
- Hercules decided to accomplish impossible tasks because he wanted to be a hero.
 - The king was impressed when he saw Hercules after his first victory.
 - c. Hercules managed to defeat Hydra entirely on his own.
 - d. Hercules ended up burying all parts of Hydra.
 - e. Every time he was given an impossible task, Hercules succeeded in doing it.
- 5. Write a paragraph of about 150 words on a heroic man or woman that you heard or read about in your childhood. Explain in your account whether the story was a true or a mythical one, and why you consider the person you have described to be heroic.**
- 6. Make a list of seven prepositions you have come across in the passage. Now make a sentence with each of these prepositions.**



Answer Key

Lesson 1

3. behold – দেখা, তাকানো

fig tree – ছাতিম গাছ

roosting – পাখির বাসা

dome – গম্বুজ

hush – চুপ করা / করানো

honeycombed – মৌচাকের মতো দেখতে

warning – সতর্কবানী

desolate – নিঃসঙ্গ

wagtail – লম্বা লেজওয়ালা ছোট পাখি

wailed – দুঃখ ও বেদনা ভারাক্রান্ত কান্না

5. a. True

b. False

Correct ans: The scene which he came across was serene and quiet.

c. False.

Correct ans: Chand sailed in a gorgeous boat named “ Madhukar” and Behula sailed in a “vhela” which is made of some plants.

d. True.

e. False.

Correct ans: The poem is about the eternal beauty of Bengal.

6. leafy – adjective, sighted – verb, incomparable – adjective besides – adverb, wagtail – noun, strings – noun.

Lesson 2

2. (i) play (ii) charm (iii) wild (iv) around (v) their

3.

a. God Apollo, the son of Zeus and Hera and Muse Calliope were Orpheus's parents.

b. Orpheus is famous for his perfect and charming heavenly lyre music.

c. His fellow mortals could not withstand the charm of his music and crowded around him and the wild animals were softened by the music of Orpheus.

d. Animals were softened by his music and relaxed somewhat of their hardness which was softened by the notes of Orpheus.

e. “Music for life”

4.

a.. Importance of music in your life. – Music is an important element for making our everyday life relaxed. It freshens our mind and gives us relaxation from the boredom of everyday chores. Music gives us enjoyment and refreshes our hearts. Different types of music give us happiness, show us the meanings of life and cheer us for taking the new challenges.

b. Your favourite music. – My favourite music is Rabindra Sangeet. Songs written by Rabindranath Tagore are extremely connected to the inner places of human life. They represent every segment of human life such as love, family, pain, happiness and relationship with God and religious views too. They show us a complete code of life.

c. My favourite band is “Chirkut”. This is a Bangladeshi band. Their works are very admirable as their selection of the band’s name. They are working on some of our classical music in new way which I like very much.

d. Any musical programme on Rabindra Sangeet is favourite to me.

5. a + v, b + ii, c + iv, d + iii, e + i.

Lesson 3

3.

- a. True.
- b. False.

Correct ans: Gazi is followed by people in the parts of Bengal close to the Sunderbans.

- c. True.
- d. True.
- e. False.

Correct ans: British Museum keeps Gazi Pir's art.

4.

- a. legend- পৌরাণিক বিখ্যাত ব্যক্তি
- b. docile- বাধ্য
- c. protection – রক্ষা
- d. creek – ছোট নদী
- e. vigilant – সতর্ক প্রহরারত
- f. predatory – লুণ্ঠনকারী
- g. collection – সংগ্রহ

5.

- a) According to some myths and legends, Gazi Pir could extraordinarily calm dangerous animals and make them docile.
- b) Gazi performed his miracles in the parts of Bengal close to the Sunderbans. That region was full of canals and creeks, indeed, a kind of watery jungle bordering the Bay of Bengal.
- c) Gazi was admired in parts of rural Bangladesh for a long time because his works were connected to a religious view and apparently people started to pray to him for protection.
- d) The myth of Gazi is kept alive in Bangladesh and even outside the country in folk literature as well as art and in indigenous theatre performance. Some Gazir paat scrolls are part of the collection of the British Museum.

6. Furthermore, in addition, besides, correspondingly, it follows that, overall, naturally, in that case, under the circumstances, for instance, in general, particularly, especially, rather, alternatively etc.

Lesson 4

3.

- a. had to undergo (had to perform) Hercules had to undergo so many difficult tasks in his lifetime.
- b. involved a fight with (include a fight with someone) Hercules' first task involved a fight with a fierce lion.

- c. took him nowhere (give no positive result) The first fight took him nowhere.
- d. different tactic (a different, planned method to achieve a particular goal) The soldier followed a different tactic to defeat the beast.
- d. entirely on his own (relying entirely on one's own self) Sindabad conducted the fight entirely on his own.
- e. a sight (a scene of something special) The fight between Hercules and the lion created a terrible sight.
- f. succeeded in (to be successful) Hercules succeeded in burning all the heads of Hydra.
- g. acquire a reputation (become largely famous and reputed) Hercules acquired a reputation all over the world by dint of his immense strength.

4.

- a. F
- b. F
- c. T
- d. F
- e. T

6.

Of – He is the son of a rich man.

In- Hercules' myth is included in Greek mythology.

With- Hercules had to undergo a fight with Hydra.

By- He managed to do the work himself.

To- Hercules attempted a different trick to kill the Hydra.

On- We are working with a project on environmental change.

Off- Don't put off the fire.