

4 ELEMENTS

Legends

AIR



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Improve the foreign language
learning and intercultural
competences of adults through e-
learning

The project

FOUR ELEMENTS is an initiative called to raise awareness and appreciation of the importance of culture and heritage as well as to train educators working with adult learners who want to improve their skills and competences necessary in today's EU labour market.

The project will take advantage of the potential of the common European cultural values associated to the 4 elements (earth, water, air and fire) to empower adults to improve their digital, foreign language and intercultural competences.

The partnership expects to develop and deliver innovative teaching materials presented in a culturally accessible E-book consisting of European legends and stories – giving visibility to the underlying

common EU values and principles, especially adapted to learners with special needs.

To achieved such objectives, partners will develop:

- An interactive map: a collection of legends and stories related to earth, water, air and fire, in different EU countries.
- Digital Books with national legends and stories related to the four elements.
- Methodological recommendations for adult educators.

To find more information, access the Four Elements platform [here](#).

Digital books

The nations of Europe all have rich cultures of myth and folklore which give the different regions their particular individual flavour. Here we have grouped traditional stories from Belgium, Estonia, France, Greece, Italy, Slovenia and Spain according to the four elements: earth, air, wind and fire.

They are specially adapted to adult learners and can be used to develop language or ICT skills among your students while enhancing intercultural understanding.

Alongside the stories, this digital book contains interactive exercises and is in Easy Read format. All the material in it can be downloaded and printed. Teachers and trainers will find tips and suggestions for how to use it on the Recommendations section of this site.

European partnership

Four Elements is an Erasmus+ KA204 project designed to highlight the importance of culture and heritage at European Union level. It aims to train educators working with adult learners to enable them to acquire the skills and competences, including linguistic and digital skills and competences, required in the European labour market.

The project is coordinated by : CVO EduKempen (Belgium). The partnership also includes DomSpain Consulting (Spain), The Central Library of Võru County (Estonia), Les Apprimeurs (France), Istituto dei Sordi di Torino (Italy), Slovenian Third Age University (Slovenia), MyArtist (Greece).

Erasmus+ project



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The Buckriders of Postel

MYTH

Main element: Air

Language of the original: Dutch

Date of origin: 17th century

Origin of the legend: A book written by S.J.P. Sleinada in 1779 (real name Pastor A. Daniels)

To find more information about the legend, access the Four Elements platform [here](#).

Name of a group of robbers in the province of Limburg.

This legend tells the story of the Buckriders of Postel, a small city in the province of Limburg. The Buckriders are ghosts or demons, who ride through the sky on the back of flying billy goats provided to them by Satan. One stormy night in the dark Middle Ages, the Buckriders attacked the monastery of Postel while the monks were praying in the chapel. But the monks successfully protected their monastery by praying all night, making the black goats immobile. After their failure, the Buckriders were never seen again. Later the name was adopted by thieves and other criminals to scare people. People were accused of being Buckriders, were tortured until they confessed and were wrongly convicted, in the same way that people were wrongly convicted during witch hunts.

Pied Piper of Hamelin

MYTH

Main element: Air

Language of the original: Dutch

Date of origin: 15th century

Origin of the legend: The earliest known depiction of the story was in a stained glass window in the church of Hamelin, c. 1300

To find more information about the legend, access the Four Elements platform [here](#).

A number of theories suggest that children died of some natural causes such as disease or starvation and that the Piper was a symbolic figure of Death.

In 1284, when the town of Hamelin was suffering from a rat infestation, a piper dressed in multicoloured clothing appeared, claiming to be a rat-catcher. He promised the mayor a solution to their problem with the rats. The mayor, in turn, promised to pay him 1000 golden coins for the removal of the rats. The piper accepted and played his pipe to lure the rats with an eerie sound into the Weser River, where they all drowned. The strange piper had got rid of all the rats and kept his promise. He then approached the mayor for his reward. The mayor and the town's people had rejoiced as they watched the bizarre sight. But since then the mayor had changed his mind. When the piper went to him, he said, "It is a wonderful task you

have accomplished but isn't 1000 golden coins too much for one day's work? I will pay you 500 golden coins." The piper looked at the mayor in surprise and then walked out. In the street he pulled out his flute again and started playing it. This time the sound that came from the flute was different but was eerie as well. All 130 children of Hamelin started to follow the piper. The piper walked out of the town and disappeared into the mountains. The children followed him. The parents of the children wept, "Where has the piper taken our children?" They went to the mayor and complained about it. The mayor was helpless. He knew that he had been dishonest with the piper. The piper returned to Hamelin but the children didn't accompany him. The mayor rushed to him, begging for forgiveness, and paid him 1000 golden coins. He pleaded with the piper to get the children back. Without uttering a single word, the piper turned and walked away. He returned after a few hours, this time with all the children.

Lange Wapper

MYTH

Main element: Air

Language of the original: Dutch

Origin of the legend: Antwerp (Belgium)

To find more information about the legend, access the Four Elements platform [here](#).

Stories of the old town of Antwerp.

Four short stories about Lange Wapper in the city of Antwerp.

Story one: A man was sitting in an inn in the old town of Antwerp. When he went home, he was rather drunk. He heard footsteps behind him. The man turned around and saw another man. The drunk stopped, so did the other. The drunk ran away to his home, but he was followed. The drunk was scared and hid in his bed. Suddenly, a man knocked at the window. It was Lange Wapper who was as big as his house. Lange Wapper said: "If you get drunk again, I will break your neck." In a second story, children were playing near the Steenplein in Antwerp. Suddenly, a rich man approached. He handed out all kind of candy. The children followed the man in the direction of Boom. Suddenly, the rich man disappeared. The only thing the children heard was a devil's laugh. They realized the man was Lange Wapper. Another story is about Stans van 't Gansken, a wheedling woman. She hid next to a foundling home in Antwerp where mothers

could abandon their newborn babies. Stans blackmailed the women: if they did not give her a large amount of hush money, Stans would inform everybody that they had abandoned their babies. Everyone paid her. One day, Stans found a baby in front of her door. She took the child and wanted to dump it at the foundling home. Suddenly, the baby turned into a giant. It was Lange Wapper. He beat the woman so hard she would never forget it. After that, Stans was never seen again near the foundling home. In a fourth story, a young woman lived near Groenplaats in Antwerp. She had four lovers and publicly declared she could even handle a fifth one. One evening she invited the four lovers one by one in her house. One hour before the first lover arrived, someone knocked at the door. It was a man who presented himself as the fifth lover and invited the woman for a walk, to which she agreed. Meanwhile, Lange Wapper hid in the house and used his shapeshifting gift. He wanted to know if the men really loved the woman so he gave them a task. The first man was sent to the cemetery to sit under the big cross. The second had to lie down in a coffin under the cross. The third had to knock on the coffin until someone turned up. The fourth had to walk in the cemetery with a large chain. The four men and the woman died: the first man was scared to death when the second one crawled into the coffin. The second man was scared to death when the third one knocked on the coffin. The third man died when he heard the noise of the chain and he thought it was the devil. The fourth man ran to the house of the woman, who had come home from her walk, to tell his story. The woman was so scared she died of a stroke. The fourth man went crazy, jumped into the river Scheldt and drowned. The fifth man was revealed to be an assistant of Lange Wapper.

The Northern Lights

FAIRY TALE

Main element: Air

Language of the original: Estonian

Date of origin: 1924

Author: Juhan Kunder

To find more information about the legend, access the Four Elements platform [here](#).

The Northern Lights - spectacular solar phenomenon is one of nature's greatest wonders, creating ethereal lights in a range of colours that dance and swirl across the night sky. The Northern Lights have only recently been understood by modern science, though have long been of inherent fascination to those who have seen them. Incredible myths and fairy tales inspired by them are used in many Nordic countries, also in Estonia. Unfortunately it is not possible to see northern lights very often in Estonia.

Once there lived a squire who used to go sledging every Thursday night in the dept of winter and return only before daybreak. None of his servants was allowed to see him off or to receive him on arrival. He harnessed and unharnessed his horse himself. He never showed his horse or the harness to anyone.

He had threatened to shoot anyone who dared break into his secret stall in the stable. The key to the stall was safely guarded-by

day it was in his inside breast-pocket, by night, under his pillow.

The coachman, however, was curious to see what the secret horse and harness were like and what trips his master took every week.

One Thursday night the coachman picked up his courage, went to the stable early in the evening and crouched in the dark corner near the sealed door.

He had not waited long when his master came and opened the door to the secret stall. Suddenly the large stable became bright as though lighted by scores of candles. The coachman huddled in his corner motionless like a hedgehog because had his master noticed him it would have been the end of him.

The squire pulled out the sledge which was glowing brightly. Then he went to lead out the horse. Meanwhile the coachman crept under the sledge. The horse was soon harnessed and hitched to the sledge, and both the animal and the sleigh were covered with a caparison, lest the light should wake up the members of the household.

The coachman crept out from under the sleigh and stationed himself standing on the runners behind the sleigh where he could not be seen by his master.

Having finished all the necessary preparations the squire seated himself on the sleigh and then with the runners howling, made for the North.

After a few hours' ride the coachman noticed that the caparison had disappeared and both the horse and the sleigh sparkled like fire.

Now the coachman beheld squires and dames in shining vehicles approaching from all directions and scorching past them. There rose

an incredible tumult with deafening roar and rustle. The horses galloped past and through one another. The commotion reminded the coachman of a race with thousand-rouble bets or a wedding-ride. Only now did he realize that the racing took place over the clouds which gleamed deep under them like smooth frozen lakes.

After some time the merry company grew scarcer and the coachman's master called to a squire shooting past him, "Brother, the other Northern Lights are leaving, time for us to go too."

The master and the coachman flew homewards. Next day the members of the household talked animatedly about the exceptionally bright Northern Lights they had seen the previous night.

The coachman, however, kept his mouth shut, he did not so much as hint at his nocturnal ride. They say that as an old man he told his grandson about his adventure and this is how the story got round.

Even to this day some people are believed to go riding as Northern Lights, and if on a winter night you see Aurora Borealis flaring brightly, it is to mean that they are having their wedding party, dancing vehemently.

Waking up the Wind

FAIRY TALE

Main element: Air

Language of the original: Estonian

Date of origin: 1955

To find more information about the legend, access the Four Elements platform [here](#).

Once the wind lay down for a rest and fell asleep. His slumber was neither long nor short, but all the people, animals and plants began to miss him greatly. Since the wind failed to appear around any corner, all animals, both big and small, started to look for him. But the wind was nowhere to be found. In the end, a spider went out in search of him. He wandered far and wide, climbing over high mountains, and discovered the wind sleeping by a huge rock. The spider wove his web over the wind and then woke him.

The wind woke up and learned from the spider how much everyone missed him and how eagerly they were waiting for him to return. The wind was glad to hear this and wanted to get up and hurry home, but warned the tiny spider beforehand, "When I get up, be sure to stay out of my way!"

The spider said, "Wait a moment, dear wind. Please wait until I return to my home over the mountains – then you can rise and blow as strongly as you can!"

The wind promised to grant his wish. On the very top of the highest mountain, the spider met a fly. "Hey, fly!"

"Hey, hey!"

"You know, I found the wind. He was sleeping by a huge rock on the other side of the mountain!"

In a blink the fly flew back and announced to everybody that he had found the wind and had woken him up from his sleep. As a reward, the fly was granted the privilege of being the first to taste any food.

Finally the spider himself returned, and heard that the fly had already received the reward for waking up the wind. No one believed that it had actually been the spider who had done the deed. The spider received no word for thanks whatsoever. From that day on, spiders weave their webs everywhere in order to catch flies and feast on them with great pleasure.

The Retribution of Jack Frost

FAIRY TALE

Main element: Air

Language of the original: Estonian

Date of origin: 1964

Author: August Jakobson

To find more information about the legend, access the Four Elements platform [here](#).

One half of the village lay on low and flat terrain, the other half spread on the gravelly slopes of drumlin landscape. The plain was rich and fertile, the meagre soil of the drumlin country grew puny crops. The lowlanders were stuck-up and noisy, the highlanders spoke little and wore a constant troubled look.

One summer, the lowland farmers were sitting in the local inn drinking whiskey and biting sausage to it. And they had every reason for feasting: there was a promise of a good harvest that year!

Boasting of their riches, the farmers were all in high spirits. There entered an old man dressed in tatters and asked the innkeeper whether he could give him shelter for the night. As the landlord was doing good business, he, too, turned up his nose and snapped haughtily over his shoulder, "No, I can't."

"Right, no shelter for a tramp like this!" the chorus of the rich farmers joined in.

“Do let me stay overnight! You can see I’m old and tired, where could I go at this late hour?” the tattered old man begged.

“No, I can’t,” the landlord repeated even more firmly.

And the rich farmers clamoured, “No! No shelter, no shakedown for him!”

“Don’t put him up for the night!”

“Kick the scamp out!”

“Out with him!”

The old man turned resignedly and made for the door, looked back on the threshold and said in a threatening tone,

“Just you wait, you niggards! You’ll have reason to remember Jack Frost.”

So saying the man left the inn and went to that part of village which was situated on the slopes of the gravelly hills. The first door he knocked at was hospitably opened to him.

Taking his leave in the morning the old man said gratefully,

“Best thanks, brother! And best thanks to your neighbours, too. I bet they would have given me a shakedown and fed me the same as you.”

“Sure enough. Because they’re no stone-hearted robbers any of them,” the farmer rejoined.

“Well, eh... And may your crops grow thick and tall, taller than the tallest man!” the old man said.

The lowland farmers continued their feast in the inn until small hours when the next day broke. But the moment the first rays of the sun penetrated through the window it grew bitterly cold in the room.

At first the innkeeper alone began to shiver, while the conceited farmers laughed and mocked at him ruthlessly. By and by, however, even the greatest mockers desisted – all of a sudden they, too, were seized by a violent fit of shivering. There was nothing for it but to run home as fast as their legs would carry them, and seek warmth under heaps of sheepskin coats. Finally they stopped shivering with cold, but they had to brace themselves for an even greater shock. The thing was that the unforeseen late frost had killed all the crops on the fields of the plain, all to the last blade and shoot. All their grain had gone to the granaries of Jack Frost, while the crops of the highland farmers looked a lot thicker and taller than before!

So after all the haughty flat-land farmers came to understand that in this world one did not fare well with evil and envy.

The legend of Mistral

LEGEND

Main element: Air

Language of the original: French

To find more information about the legend, access the Four Elements platform [here](#).

If the sun is often omnipresent in Provence, it is because it is associated with a wind well known to Provençals, and especially well feared, especially by the inhabitants of the Rhone Valley: the mistral. This dry and cold wind has always raised questions about its origins, and has given rise to many legends about it.

A long time ago, a wind master was born in the north of the Ardèche, in the Vivarais. From under the giant arch of an open rock, his sound emerges. Imperious, cranky, it swells into eddies, before leaving in powerful gusts sweeping everything in their path. Men have named it: the Mistral.

The mistral is unpredictable, when he is angry, he tears everything away, tiles, fences, trees.

In a village one day, the farmers held a meeting to discuss the most effective way to contain the Mistral. They decided to build a barricade around his birthplace, on each pillar of the rock, on a quiet winter's day. They used strong boards carved from century-old olive

trees, which had been cut and sawn by carpenters years earlier, so that the barricade was extremely solid.

One morning, the Mistral found himself locked up. Furious, he began to blow on the boards, louder and louder, and the roar of his gusts was heard leagues away. But despite all his efforts, the boards resisted his outbursts of anger, he was indeed a prisoner.

Then, in rage, he threatened the village: "When I succeed in freeing myself, I will uproot everything in my path, there will be nothing left!".

"All the more reason to leave you locked up," the villagers replied.

"I curse you! Your country will be nothing but desolation, your lands will be swampy and infested with mosquitoes, water will swell in your fields and houses, fevers will kill your children and your elders. Ah, you'll soon regret doing this to me!"

When summer came, a great heat fell on the region. Frightful smells spread in the streets of the villages, aggressive insects attacked the elderly with their wrinkled skin and the children with their velvety skin. The stagnant waters became pestilential. Large clouds and smothering mists overwhelmed cattle and men.

The villagers consulted each other and decided to free the Mistral, because he dried up the soaked lands, dissipated the clouds and ultimately proved to be more beneficial than evil.

The Mistral, who heard the debates, promised that if he were released, he would be caressing and gentle, and would contain his natural violence.

But as soon as the fence was knocked down, the anger of having been locked up exploded within him. He began to blow, to scold, to

accelerate his gusts until he carried away tiles and trees.

Then a little boy whispered to him, "But what about your promise? Did you forget it?"

The unleashed wind died down abruptly. Suddenly, he cuddled the trees, stroked the tiles of the houses, tickled the garden fences. And soon, all the misery the peasants had endured was a bad memory. But, we do not remake ourselves, and the old bad habits of the Mistral persisted despite his good will. To avoid breaking his promise to the villagers, he then decided to move further south, to other regions where he could give free rein to his instincts: that is how, since then, he has blown into the plains of the south...

The princess and the nightingale

TALE

Main element: Air

Language of the original: French

Date of origin: 1881

Author: J.-B. Frédéric Ortoli

To find more information about the legend, access the Four Elements platform [here](#).

The princess and the nightingale is a corsican tale from the end of the 19th century. The nightingale is behind numerous tales, popular narratives and legends. Its birdsong is considered as both a sad song and a love song. Thus, the nightingale in love and the nightingale poet is a symbol largely popularized by many cultures.

Belladonna is a young and beautiful princess. At her birth, fairies give her the ability to transform into whatever she wants. When she turns fifteen, the princess tells her mother, the Queen, that she wishes to get married. The Queen is surprised because of her daughter's young age but ends up agreeing.

However, Hop-o'-My-Thumb overhears his parents and the next day he collects small white pebbles from a river. During the evening, when the lumberjack and his wife lead their children into the wood, the small boy uses the stones to mark a trail that enables him to successfully lead his brothers back home.

The young girl announces to her mother that she wants to get married to the beautiful nightingale who sings every morning in the castle's garden. The Queen refuses, thinking her daughter is losing her mind. But the princess insists, explaining to her mother that she will transform into a nightingale too.

Distraught, the Queen decides to lock her daughter in the castle's tower where a guard will keep a close eye on her.

However, the young girl manages to trick the guard and transforms into a fly. She then flies away when he opens the door to bring her some fruits. Once she is far away from the castle, she turns back into her natural form and walks through the fields looking for the beautiful nightingale.

Therefore, when the Queen comes to visit her daughter, the guard explains that the young princess ran away. The Queen sends him to find her. After looking for her all day long in vain, he finally sees her near a river. He asks her to come home but Belladonna transforms into an eel and jumps into the water.

The man goes back to the Queen and tells her what just happened. She explains that the eel was her daughter, and that he should have caught it. Thus, the guard has to go looking for the princess again. He catches sight of her into a field but when he gets closer the field turns into a deep forest where the guard gets lost. When he manages to find his way back to the castle, he tells the Queen what has happened and the latter answers: "The forest was my daughter. If you had pulled off a branch from one of the trees, she would have turned back into a princess again."

Thus, the guard goes looking for the princess once again. He enters a village and sees a priest reading a book in front of a chapel. The guard asks him if he has seen beautiful young princess. The priest does not answer but invites the guard to listen to the Mass. Angry, the guard goes back to the castle. Once again, the Queen explains that the priest was her daughter and that he should have caught him.

Bored with the guard's failures, the Queen decides to look for the princess herself. After three days' walking, she finds her sitting under a tree where the beautiful nightingale was singing. When Belladonna catches sight of her mother, she immediately turns into a rose bush.

But the Queen, who knows her daughter well, pulls it unceremoniously out of the ground and walks back to the castle.

However, during the three days' walk, the rose bush loses all of its leaves and when they arrive to the castle, it is completely dried up. The nightingale, who has followed the Queen, sings the saddest song of all, crying the death of the princess.

During the three following days, the nightingale sings the same sad song, perched on a tree in the castle's garden. However, on the morning of the fourth day, the bird does not sing. He has died of sorrow.

The Oak and the Reed

FABLE

Main element: Air

Language of the original: French

Date of origin: 1668

Author: Jean de La Fontaine

To find more information about the legend, access the Four Elements platform [here](#).

The Oak and the Reed is a fable written by the famous French poet Jean de La Fontaine during the 17th Century. Fables are very short stories which always conclude with a moral, allowing the reader to learn and be entertained at the same time. Today, Jean de La Fontaine's Fables are still often used in schools and represent a masterwork in French literature.

The oak one day addresses the reed:

The Nature has been to you indeed

Ungenerous my humble friend.

The smallest bird that flits in air

Is too heavy for you to bear;

The slightest wind that wreathes the lake

Makes your ever trembling head shake.

While my towering form
Dares with the mountain top
I can make the solar blaze stop,
And fight with the storm.

What seems to you the blast of death,
Is for me a zephyr's breath.

If beneath my branches you would have grown,
My branches that spread far round their friendly bower,
Less suffering your life would have known,
Defended from the tempest's power.

Unhappily you always show
In open air your slender form,
Along the marshes wet and low,
That fringe the kingdom of the storm.

To you, declare I must,
Dame Nature seems unjust.

Then modestly replied the reed:
"Your pity, sir, is kind indeed,
But wholly needless for my sake.
The wildest wind that ever blew
Is safe to me compared with you.

I bend, indeed, but never break.
Thus far, I own, the hurricane
Has beat your sturdy back in vain;
But wait the end." Just at the word,
The tempest's hollow voice was heard.
The North sent forth her fiercest child,
Dark, jagged, pitiless, and wild.
The oak, erect, endured the blow;
The reed bowed gracefully and low.
But, gathering up its strength once more,
In greater fury than before,
The savage blast
Overthrew, at last,
That proud, old, sky-encircled head,
Whose feet entwined the empire of the dead!

Aeolus' Pouch

MYTH

Main element: Air

Language of the original: Greek

Origin of the legend: Greek mythology

To find more information about the legend, access the Four Elements platform [here](#).

A traditional story about the winds and their power.

We chose this myth because it produced a phrase that we use when a situation has been created with unpredictable and uncontrollable developments.

Aeolus was the son of Arni and Poseidon. After Arni gave birth to twin boys, Aeolus and Viotios, her father blinded her and put her in prison. He also gave orders for the twin boys to be left to die on a mountain. However, the myth says that a cow came and fed the twins with her milk, until some shepherds witnessed this miracle and took the children with them, planning to raise them as their own sons.

At the same time, the King of Ikaria and his wife Theano were childless. Theano knew that shepherds had found two little boys in the mountain and wanted to have them as her own. So Theano asked the shepherds to give her the children they found in the mountains. She wanted to pretend to her husband, the King of Ikaria, that the boys were their biological children.

The shepherds decided to let Theano have the two children, as they would live a better life with her and the King. Theano took the two boys and told the King that they were his sons.

After some time, Theano and the King managed to have two biological sons. When the children grew up, Theano was frustrated because her husband used to favour Aeolus and Viotis, because they were more handsome than their own children. One day, when the King was away, Theano told her biological children the truth and urged them to kill Aeolus and Viotis when they went hunting. When the four children went to the mountains to hunt, Poseidon helped Aeolus and Viotis to kill Theanos' children and told them the truth about their real parents.

After that, Aeolus couldn't face seeing Theano and the King again. Poseidon helped him settle down on a Greek island, then named Aiolia, and gave him the power to control the winds.

It is also said that Aeolus had twelve children: six sons and six daughters, who personalised the winds. Aeolus lived with his wife and controlled the winds, holding and releasing them at his discretion. Their sons were the strong winds and their daughters the mild ones, the auras.

During their journey home from Troy, Odysseus and his companions arrived at Aeolus' island where they stayed for a couple of days. When they decided to continue their trip, Aeolus closed all the winds except one in a leather pouch in order to help them travel without problems to their destination, Ithaca. But somewhere in the middle of the trip, Odysseus' companions opened the leather pouch and all the winds were freed. They all started to blow and as a result

Odysseus' boat was driven back to the spot where they had begun their journey, Aeolus' island.

Daedalus and Icarus

MYTH

Main element: Air

Language of the original: Greek

Origin of the legend: Greek mythology

To find more information about the legend, access the Four Elements platform [here](#).

**A traditional story about a father and a son that tried to escape prison using wings that they made by themselves.
We chose this myth because it describes the power of the will and the clever ideas that can help you escape nearly any situation.**

Daedalus was a very respectable and talented man from Athens, and it said that he was the offspring of the first king of Athens, Cecrops. He was skilled in many things, such as architecture and sculpture, and he was known for his inventions. Daedalus thrown his nephew, Talus, from the Acropolis because of a prophecy that said he would grow to be a greater artist than his uncle.

For this crime, he was sent to Crete to serve the king, Minos. Daedalus eventually had a son, Icarus, with one of the slaves and mistresses of King Minos, the beautiful Naucratis.

King Minos's wife had a son, the Minotaur, with a bull that Poseidon send to Minos as a gift. The Minotaur was a dreaded

monster with the body of a man and the head of a bull. King Minos was very ashamed of this creature and decided to imprison him in a labyrinth and feed him only humans. King Minos forced Athens to send him men, who would be sacrificed in memory of King Minos's fallen son, Androgenous. King Minos asked Daedalus to build the labyrinth and imprisoned the Minotaur in the middle of it. Daedalus carried out the king's wishes.

Theseus, the king of Athens at that time, volunteered to be offered as a tribute to the Minotaur, in order to kill the horrible beast and end the sending of young men as tributes. When Theseus arrived in Crete, Minos's daughter, Ariadne, fell in love with him and decided to find a way to help him kill the Minotaur and escape from the labyrinth.

As Daedalus knew that Ariadne had fallen in love with Theseus, he told her the mystery of the labyrinth and Ariadne told Theseus. When Minos found out that Daedalus had helped Theseus escape the labyrinth, he imprisoned him and his son Icarus. The prison was in the middle of the sea and the only way to leave was by ship. Daedalus knew that no ship would take him and Icarus back to Athens and he thought of another plan to escape. He asked for a lot of feathers and he built wings for him and Icarus from the feathers and wax. Before the two of them took off Daedalus warned Icarus not to go too close to the water because his wings would fall off due to the humidity. He also warned him not to go too close to the sun because the wax of the wings would melt. But Icarus, mesmerized by the feeling of flying, didn't hear his father's warning and flew higher than he should have done; the wind wafted him close to the sun and the wax of his wings melted, resulting him falling to his death into the sea.

The North Wind and the Sun

MYTH

Main element: Air

Language of the original: Greek

Author: Aesop

To find more information about the legend, access the Four Elements platform [here](#).

A story about the argument between the Sun and the North Wind over who is the stronger of the two.

Once upon a time, the Sun and the North Wind had a big argument about which of the two was the stronger. Both were very stubborn. They argued and argued until the North Wind proposed a plan to find out the truth. The Sun was a little bit sceptical at the beginning, but he was sure that he would win so he agreed.

So, the North Wind revealed the plan he had in mind. He told the Sun that they should pick one man randomly and then take it in turns to try to get him naked. Whoever succeeded would be the winner and the stronger.

After a while a man passed by and the North Wind started blowing with all his power. The man bent his head and crossed his arms in front of his chest, in order to protect himself from the wind. The North Wind was furious and he started blowing harder. The man

buttoned up his coat and threw a woollen blanket around him. The harder the North Wind blew, the tighter the man held the blanket. The North Wind was disappointed and stopped blowing.

Then it was the Sun's turn. When the North Wind stopped blowing, the Sun peeked through and the man took the blanket off and put it back in his backpack. The Sun started to shine a little bit more and the man unbuttoned his coat. As the Sun shone brighter and brighter, the man started to sweat and took off all his clothes, one by one, until he was completely naked. He looked for a tree in whose shade he could sit. As there were no trees nearby, he got into a river and stood there, as the Sun diminished his glow.

The beautiful Alda

LEGEND

Main element: Air

Language of the original: Italian

Date of origin: Difficult to know, maybe 17th century

To find more information about the legend, access the Four Elements platform [here](#).

Saint Michael's Abbey is really important in the Susa Valley not only because it is in a strategic place from where all the territory can be controlled, but also because it is a culturally rich area full of mystery.

According to the legend, Saint Michael killed the Devil and sent him back to Hell. The places of worship of the archangel can be found along the line going from Ireland to Israel. The three most important sites on this line are Mont Saint Michel in France, the Sacra di San Michele in the Susa Valley and the sanctuary of Monte Sant'Angelo in Gargano (Puglia, Italy) and they are all at the same distance from one other.

The Susa Valley is an alpine valley located west of Turin, on the border with France. At the head of this valley is Pirchiriano's mountain with St. Michael's abbey overlooking it.

Alda lived near the abbey. When she turned sixteen everybody called her the Beautiful Alda. She was innocent with harmonious

features. Alda was very religious and every day she went to the abbey to pray to the Virgin and the archangel Michael, though the area was becoming quite dangerous: beside the abbey, in a castle, lived a terrifying and arrogant earl with his soldiers.

The earl noticed the Alda's beauty and ordered two soldiers to arrest her and bring her to him. One day, when Alda was coming back from her usual visit to the abbey, the two soldiers began bothering and following her. So Alda escaped, but she found herself on a path leading to a cliff: the two soldiers giggled because they felt sure they would catch her. Alda saw that in front of her there was only a precipice. Alda decided to jump into the emptiness, calling upon the Virgin and the archangel Michael, and at that moment a miracle happened: the Beautiful Alda began falling slowly and softly and she reached the earth without getting hurt.

The entire valley heard about the miracle, and everyone wanted to meet Alda.

Unfortunately Alda became vain. She decided to jump again from the precipice; but, despite her prayers to the Virgin and the archangel Michael, her body miserably fell on the rocks and she died.

Piumadoro and Piombofino

FAIRY TALE

Main element: Air

Language of the original: Italian

Date of origin: Between 1909 and 1913

Author: Guido Gozzano was born in 1883 and died in 1914 in Turin, though most of his life he spent near this city in the mountains and on the coast. His health was fragile. He was active in cultural life of Turin, he became a poet and wrote many stories following the style of the Grimm Brothers and Andersen. The majority of his stories, including this one, was written between 1909 and 1913.

What's particular in this fairy tale? The future queen saves the future king: she had to overcome many difficulties to live up their mission.

To find more information about the legend, access the Four Elements platform [here](#).

Piumadoro was an orphan girl who lived with her grandfather in the woods. She was blonde, beautiful and nice. Everybody loved her.

One spring day, Piumadoro caught a butterfly which had landed on the clover nearby. The butterfly begged her to let it go, saying that it was going to give birth to its caterpillars in a faraway land. Piumadoro let it free. The happy butterfly told her that one day she might be rewarded for her good deed.

Another day Piumadoro took a dandelion and wanted to blow it in the wind, but the dandelion asked her to let it go, because it wanted to deposit its seeds in a faraway land. Piumadoro let it go, and the happy dandelion told her that it might return the favour.

Yet another day Piumadoro grabbed a beetle that was hiding behind some roses. The beetle begged her to let it go because it wanted to look for other roses in a faraway land. Piumadoro opened her hand and the happy beetle thanked her, saying that one day it might repay the favour.

At the age of fourteen, Piumadoro began losing weight. She was still very beautiful, but each day she grew thinner and lighter. At first, nobody was worried about her losing weight and she was happy climbing among the branches of the tall trees, singing: "There is no one I love as much as Piumadoro. Oh! Piumadoro, beautiful little girl, you'll be the queen!" Soon she was so light that her grandpa had to hook some stones on her skirt to stop her from blowing away, but even the stones weren't enough and Piumadoro had to be locked up in her home. Nevertheless, she kept singing "There is no one I love as much as Piumadoro. Oh! Piumadoro, beautiful little girl, you'll be the queen!"

One morning Piumadoro woke up lighter and less joyful than usual. She called her grandpa, but he didn't reply. So, she approached his bed and saw that he was dead. Piumadoro cried for three days and three nights, then she decided to go out to search for help, but as soon as she opened the door the wind blew her up, so high, as she were a soap bubble. Piumadoro was dizzy and scared, she closed her eyes and she got entangled in her beautiful hair. Then she felt that

someone was trying to encourage her and was promising her help: there were the butterfly, the dandelion and the beetle.

The wind brought Piumadoro, the butterfly, the dandelion and the beetle to a castle, which belonged to the Fairy of Adolescence. The fairy showed Piumadoro a mirror through which she could see a wonderful garden, where was a beautiful young boy dressed as a king, lying on a golden wagon drawn by five hundred pair of oxen. That boy was Piombofino, the king of the Islands Fortunate, and he was singing "There is no one I love as much as Piumadoro. Oh! Piumadoro, beautiful little girl, you'll be the queen!" It was his voice that Piumadoro had heard singing in her ears!

The fairy explained that Piombofino was victim of a magic opposite to that affecting Piumadoro: every day Piombofino became more and more heavy. The spell would be broken if they kissed each other. To reach the Islands Fortunate, Piumadoro and her friends would have to pass three castles: each castle was inhabited by a malignant fairy who would try to trap her. The fairy gave three seeds and told her to drop one at each castle.

That evening they reached the first castle. Piumadoro felt attracted by the things she was seeing - the grandpa, her little house, the wood - but the beetle reminded her to drop the first seed. That was the castle of Falsehood and the seed she dropped was the grain of Prudence.

Two days later they reached to the second castle, a very ugly place, threatening, with dark and cadaverous people. Piumadoro dropped the second seed, that of Kindness: the whole castle was transformed and the people became kind and smiling.

The third castle appeared two days later: it was wonderful, with music, dances, tables set, carousels and theatre. Piumadoro was about to join in with the festivities, but again the beetle reminded her about the seed. When Piumadoro dropped it, all the beautiful things turned horrible: it was the castle of Desires and the seed was the grain of Wisdom.

Piumadoro kept going, transported by the wind and followed by the butterfly, the dandelion and the beetle. They called all their friends and soon Piumadoro was surrounded by a cortège!

For seven more days Piumadoro travelled and for seven days Piombofino waited for her while becoming heavier and heavier.

Finally Piumadoro arrived by Piombofino's side! She was beautiful: all the butterflies, dandelions and beetles had prepared for her a precious dress.

Piumadoro kissed Piombofino and, as in a dream, the spell disappeared and everyone started celebrating.

The flying carpet

FAIRY TALE

Main element: Air

Language of the original: Italian

To find more information about the legend, access the Four Elements platform [here](#).

Monferrato in the Piedmont region is famous because of its richness and its products: wine, cheese, truffle, hazelnuts, fresh pasta and veal.

Among its hills there are many castles and farmhouses and oral legends were born in farmers' families.

Good cuisine and wonderful lands made and still make this a territory of great value.

A nobleman named Gianfilippo returned to his beloved homeland from the Crusades in the Holy Land. Among the gifts he had brought back with him there was a carpet, a beautiful large Persian carpet that was able to fly! As in the famous Oriental stories, the carpet could fly into the sky, around the world, but it could only transport those who dearly and faithfully loved their spouse. If their love was not sincere, the carpet would first go up really high and then it would throw the traveller off.

Due to this fact perhaps Gianfilippo had not spent a lot of money buying the carpet. It was not clear that anybody would survive flying

on this carpet. Finally, somebody was found who knew the secret of the flying carpet but was nevertheless ready to try flying it, whatever the cost might be. Earl Guidobaldo was famous not only for his courage in battles, but also for his much-vaunted love for his wife. And so nothing could stop Guidobaldo from taking off: he flew on the carpet very high in the sky, till he turned into a tiny dot. Then the carpet started shaking. Earl Guidobaldo slipped down from the carpet, thinking of his love for his wife. Guidobaldo fell down and while he was falling down he started to think about a peasant woman with whom he had madly fallen in love a year before. Guidobaldo fell into a river crossing the region of Monferrato and died.

Ashamed, the carpet returned to the castle; it rolled up and hid in a corner. The whole court was speechless and all of them tried to forget what had happened.

Much later, Viscount Ugone came to Gianfilippo's castle asking about the carpet. Ugone was Guidobaldo's adversary in tournaments. He had always lost to Guidobaldo, but he wanted to challenge his enemy one last time, notwithstanding Guidobaldo was dead. Ugone was married to Donna Genoveffa and everybody presumed he was a faithful husband since he was terribly ugly! Once again nobody could stop the stubborn man. So, Ugone went up flying on the carpet. The rise was fast - as was the fall. The force with which Ugone struck the ground was reduced by a big barn and Ugone survived. Then he understood that going to brothels meant betraying his wife.

Again, the carpet returned to the castle, feeling very sorry: it was not its fault if the men were sinful, but the thought of that depressed the carpet anyway.

After a very long time the farmer Giorgione popped up at the castle to do his usual job, which was to bring barrels of his wine for Gianfilippo. He also asked to fly on the carpet. Gianfilippo refused to allow it, but Giorgione was very stubborn and so he obtained his lord's permission. The carpet with Giorgione lifted off; he saw the hills from a great height and returned to the castle, amazing everybody. How was it possible that a farmer could fly safely, while two noble men had miserably failed to do it?

Giorgione's answer was an easy one: he had no money to go to brothels and he wasn't pretty so women didn't like him. His virtue was poverty.

Gianfilippo was impressed by what the farmer was saying and was ready to grant him a wish. Giorgione only asked not to have to pay so much tax in the future.

The Horse of the Vacares Lagoon

LEGEND

Main element: Air

Language of the original: Spanish

To find more information about the legend, access the Four Elements platform [here](#).

Sierra Nevada is a mountain range with many high mountains and many glacier lagoons on its mountains. The location and shape of these lagoons are round and, usually, hidden in the mountains.

Legend says that in one of the highest mountains of Sierra Nevada, there was a lagoon where witches and wizards used to meet. One night, a shepherd who was looking for one of his lost sheep, found the lagoon. All of a sudden, he heard some voices and he hid to see what was happening. He saw two men wearing strange clothes. One of them was holding a book in his hands and they both had a special, golden glowing around them. One of the man said "Throw the net" and the other throwing the net caught a black horse coming out from the lagoon. The horse was not the one they wanted and they put it back to the lagoon. Finally, they caught a beautiful and white horse: "This is the one we want, we can continue our journey!" The men went closer to the horse and whispered some words in its ears. Then the two men rode it and the horse started to fly in the sky, jumping and riding happily through the air until they disappeared into the

night. The shepherd, amazed, left his hiding place and after that night, he and many people from the towns nearby went to the lagoon every night, but never a horse or the men were seen again.

The Olorda Witches' Palace

LEGEND

Main element: Air

Language of the original: Catalan

To find more information about the legend, access the Four Elements platform [here](#).

The legend says that there were often mists around the Olorda mountain. The wind fed these black mists and spread them slowly from the top to the plain. As the wind made them grow and grow, they began to spat large drops of rain that soon turned into damaging hail and heavy storms that shook the forests, while the hurricane winds tore trees and the rays ravaged the entire region leaving the ground covered with dry and withered leaves. The animals in the yards trembled; the beasts did not dare to leave their burrows and the dogs howled.

The peasant, who lived there, did not know how to alleviate his sadness of seeing his wife and his children go hungry. He prayed, and although his prayers seemed to have no effect, he did not lose faith. One day he observed that the fog was coming out from a well, and he remembered that his grandmother had once explained to him that the witches had their palace there. At once, he realized the cause of his misfortune. He decided to observe the area of the well and saw that the earth moved making a hellish noise. Then the peasant understood that the fog and wind grew to cover the evil spirits and witches that

lived there, and one day, the peasant even heard them laughing with terrifying and triumphant laughter.

For this reason, the friars of the convent of Torre Llimassa wanted to find a solution and summoned all the faithful of the region to follow their prayers to the sound of the bell, heading to the top of the mountain. Once on the summit they cursed the mists and nailed a cross to send the witches to the abyss.

The legend says that after this ceremony, neither the fog, nor the wind, nor the storms returned to the mountain.

The Drummer of the Bruc

LEGEND

Main element: Air

Language of the original: Catalan

Date of origin: Beginning of the 19th century

To find more information about the legend, access the Four Elements platform [here](#).

The legend of the Drummer is situated in Catalonia, concretely in the mountains of Montserrat, during the war of the French in 1808. It is believed that it happened in June 1808, when the Napoleonic soldiers approached too close to Manresa.

The legend says that, when the Napoleon's troops were arriving at Catalonia, they outnumbered the Spanish soldiers that had to resist the French army. Everybody in Catalonia was worried, but there was a little boy called Isidre who asked if he could do anything to help. He was told that he could do nothing. The French attacked with even a bigger army. The little boy asked again if he could do anything and he was answered that nothing. The boy became angry and went home to play the drum. However, his anger was increasing and he went to the mountains of Montserrat where he saw the French troops. He was scared and said, "Oh, dear", which echoed in the mountains. At that moment, Isidre decided to play the drum and he did that during the battle in the mountains of Montserrat. The sound of the drum

echoing in the mountains made the French soldiers think there were thousands of drummers with a big and powerful army meeting them. The French decided that their enemies were more numerous than it really was and they left. Due to the trick, the Spanish army defeated Napoleon's troops far superior in number and that little Isidre was considered a hero.

Speckles the Ball / Spotty Ball

FAIRY TALE

Main element: Air

Language of the original: Slovenian

Date of origin: 1936

Author: Jan Malik

To find more information about the legend, access the Four Elements platform [here](#).

Dragons are very much present in Slovenian mythology. It is no wonder, that there is also one in this extremely popular fairy tale.

Once upon a time, in a bright, neat, small house at the edge of the town, lived Grandpa and Grandma. They did not have any children, though they wanted to have a girl or a boy to live with them in their old age. Suddenly, through the open window, a talking ball bounced into the room. "I am hungry," said Speckles the Ball, also called Spotty Ball. So, Grandpa and Grandma hastily left to buy some bread and milk for her. The Spotty Ball was waiting for them when Tolovaj, a threatening dragon, saw the Spotty Ball. He thought the ball would be a nice toy for his little dragon children. "Come with me," said the dragon. At first, the ball did not want to come. Then, she broke a vase because it did not behave as it promised it would. She got frightened and off she went with the dragon. Grandma and Grandpa were very sad; they searched for the ball everywhere in the town and finally

they heard a tiny little voice. It was coming from high up a pole and it was the ball's voice. The children's audience, the Grandpa and the Grandma blew the dragon away and rescued the ball.

My umbrella can turn into a balloon

FAIRY TALE

Main element: Air

Language of the original: Slovenian

Date of origin: 1955

Author: Ela Peroci

To find more information about the legend, access the Four Elements platform [here](#).

Jelka is a little girl who lives in town and does not go to school, yet. She is imaginative and playful. Most of the time she lives in her imaginary country called Klobučarija (Hatland). This is a beautiful country where children can play without constraints as much as they want. The adult members of Jelka's family are waiting for Jelka to come back from her unreal country, but Jelka is a dreamy girl with two worlds: the real one and the other one, the unreal world to which she is taken by her umbrella. She can be in each of them at any time while all the time adults have to remain in just one world forever. The story is about adult and child ego states. Adults have contaminated their child ego state and therefore are not able to be emotional, imaginative and creative any more. They have difficulties playing with children and expressing their emotions. They may like their children to be imaginative and playful, but at the same time they are eager to see them grow up and become responsible adults.

The Loafing Little Cloud

FAIRY TALE

Main element: Air

Language of the original: Slovenian

Date of origin: 1995

Author: Janez Bitenc

To find more information about the legend, access the Four Elements platform [here](#).

The Loafing Little Cloud is white and it likes idling away time, strolling through the sky. It is ready to offer its services and is helpful in different situations. It is a gentle, mild creature who helps the helpless stars, as a kind of sky guide. The stars trust it. The Loafing Little Cloud knows what might interest the stars, therefore it sets up their travelling itinerary. When a star gets lost, the Loafing Little Cloud goes to its rescue. They are all happy when they are reunited.

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