

4 ELEMENTS

Legends

WATER



4 ELEMENTS Legends

WATER



4 ELEMENTS



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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Loreley

MYTH

Main element: Water

Language of the original: Dutch

Origin of the legend: In 1801, Clemens Brentano was the first to write the popular legend of the Loreley in his poem.

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

Rhine, city of Bacharach.

Once there was a beautiful maiden who lived in the city of Bacharach. Every man who saw her was dazzled by her beauty and immediately fell madly in love with her. Alas, she had already given her heart to a young knight who went away to war, so she turned down all other offers of marriage. The despondent failed suitors threw themselves into the Rhine to drown. Still, the girl remained true to her knight. Her loneliness and sorrow made her even more attractive. More men swore to have her, and when they failed, they killed themselves. People began to whisper about her power over men. Rumours that she was a sorceress who lured men in and cast them off to drown drew the attention of the Archbishop of Cologne. In the court at Rhens, the girl was charged with sorcery. The punishment would be burning. So deep was her longing for her knight, that she no longer cared if she lived or died, and she did

nothing to defend herself. "I beg you," she concluded wearily, "I beg you, my lord, let me die. I know, alas, that many true knights have died for love of me, and now I would like to die for the sake of one who has left me." The officers of the court, and especially the Archbishop, were so taken by her beauty that they forgave her offences, and sent her to live out her days in a Convent. On the way to the Convent, they passed the Loreley Cliff. The girl asked if she could climb it, and take one last look at the castle of her beloved knight. She reached the top before her guards, and while standing there gazing at the scene one final time, she saw a barge coming up the Rhine. On the prow stood her knight. She shouted for joy! And at that moment, the ship steered straight into the rocks. Her knight was lost to the river so she jumped in after him, both of them losing their lives the Rhine's turbulent waters.

Brabo and the giant Antigoon

MYTH

Main element: Water

Language of the original: Dutch

Origin of the legend: Antwerp (Belgium)

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

Legend on the name of the city of Antwerp.

Long, long ago, in the Roman province of Belgica, in the chilliest, northernmost reaches of Gaul where the land is flatter than the sea, there was a town where everyone was happy. The town's thriving port meant that business was good for everyone. Standing where the River Scaldis doubles back and broadens out on its final meander towards the North Sea, it was a centre for the trade of exotic wines, spices, jewels and textiles. People from far away were drawn there, seeking their fortune or just a simple livelihood. People of all kinds – young and old, rich and poor, bearded and smooth, good and evil.

Evil arrived in the form of Druon Antigoon. He seemed to appear from nowhere, a heartless, stinking mountain of a man who towered over every market stall and house in the town. His every step shook buildings to their foundations. When he boarded a ship, the vessel would lurch to one side. When he raised his arms, women, children and street entertainers would lose consciousness.

He arrived one icy winter's morning, battering down the doors of the castle, dismembering the guards and council members with his bare hands, and roaring from the ramparts that the town and all its people were now under his command.

"What does he want from us?" asked the townsfolk.

They soon had their answer. Antigoon declared that every merchant ship passing through on the river should pay a monstrous toll of half of its stock – booty he would keep for himself. Antigoon's greed and cruelty knew no limits. Any captain who refused to hand over his cargo had to fight the giant for safe passage. The outcome was always the same. Every time, the defiant commander would be beaten to a pulp on the quayside. And every time, as a warning to other rebels, the giant would hack off his hand and hurl it into the river, to the horror of the watching crowd.

Many miles distant, word of Antigoon's brutality reached the ears of Silvius Brabo, a young but much-respected Roman centurion. Appalled by the tales and determined to cut the colossus down to size, he travelled for days to the town. The stories he heard on his way of Antigoon's tyranny only stiffened his resolve. Finally, still a mile away across the flat fields, he could see, hear and smell the giant for himself. Antigoon is at the castle gates. Brabo enters slowly on horseback, dismounts, takes a deep breath and looks up at the giant.

Antigoon: (Booming) Who are you?

Brabo: My name is Brabo. And I come with one request: that you leave these people in peace and fresh air, and be gone forever!

Antigoon: (Laughing) Be gone? Ha! Never! I'm just making myself at home! But you, my friend, you'd better get yourself back to wherever you came from, or I'll decorate this miserable fort with your guts!

Brabo: (Drawing his sword) You'll have to catch me first!

Antigoon's roar shook the ground. The giant swung his fists in fury, missing Brabo by inches. The fight continued for several days. But when the giant took a desperate, exhausted swing at the soldier and toppled over, Brabo was able to raise his sword and deal a fatal blow, before cutting off the giant's huge hand and throwing it into the river. Brabo gave his name to the region (Brabant) and the city was renamed Antwerp (from "hand-werpen"; "hand-throwing").

Charles V's pot

LEGEND

Main element: Water

Language of the original: Dutch

Date of origin: 16th century

Origin of the legend: The painting "Boerendans" of Pieter Bruegel the Old had a man on it with a pot with three handles.

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

Typical story of the village of Olen.

Did you know Charles V was a great beer lover? According to the legends, he always brought a barrel of beer on his travels. And he never refused a glass of beer at the inns he used to stay in.

In Olen, where he used to hunt, they still like to talk about the legend of "the three-handled pot". The market place in Olen has even dedicated a statue to him. The farmers of Olen, who usually drank their beer from a pot without handles, wanted to show Charles V they were well-mannered too and made him a pot with one handle. When he arrived on his horse at the inn, the innkeeper's wife came outside carrying a pot of beer with a thick layer of foam. She held it by the handle and handed it to him. Charles V was forced to take hold of the pot itself. He told her, "Madam, next year you'll need a pot with

two handles, that will be a lot easier." And that's exactly what happened.

The next year, the innkeeper's wife handed Charles V a pot with two handles, but she held onto both of them. "This still doesn't work, madam. Next year, you will need one with three handles. That will be more convenient," Charles V said.

When Charles V stopped at the inn for the third year in a row, the woman welcomed him with a pot with three handles. Again, she held two of the handles, and the third handle was turned toward her chest. Charles V grabbed onto the third handle by reaching underneath the pot.

"Well, madam, it would have been as difficult as last year, had I not known there was a third handle," Charles said.

The Legend of Lake Verijärv

LEGEND

Main element: Water

Language of the original: Estonian

Date of origin: 1904

Author: Collected and written by Jaan Sandra

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

Verijärv – "blood lake" or "bloody lake" in Estonian. Verijärv is located five kilometers from the town of Võru.

Lake Verijärv is situated in a deep, boggy valley. It is a long, winding body of water with green waves. But when storm is rising these waves turn into dark frothy mountains of water, which roll onto the lake shores. The rebelling lake is tamed by high forests on the banks – from the south the lake is hidden behind old pine trees, from the north behind strong spruces.

On the north bank of the lake there stood the manor. In the mornings its red roof cast a shadow on the lake, in the evenings the waves reflected lights from its windows. Lake Verijärv belonged to the manor. The old baron was a generous man and allowed the inhabitants of small shabby huts to fish in the lake. He expected the fishermen to bring him some pikes too and paid fairly to the old men.

But when the old baron died, his son who had been living in Germany, took over the manor. The young baron was a selfish and lofty man. He forced the peasants into slavery and punished everyone, who disobeyed him. By the lake stood a stellar, where he had the peasants beaten, so that their blood flowed into the lake and coloured it red. The evil baron exploited his power and took advantage of the women and daughters of his subjects. Unfortunately, this happened also to the maiden whom the coachman of the manor was in love with. The young man started planning revenge, thinking how to pay back to the man who had dishonoured his family.

One day the baron had some business to attend in the town of Vöru. The day was long and exhausting and the baron fell asleep on his way back home. The coachman decided to act fast and liberate the locals from the despised baron. The travellers reached the steepest bank of the lake where the road runs exactly next to the lake. This seemed to be the best place to execute the baron and the coachman turned off the road and raced in full speed into the deep dark water.

On stormy nights one can still hear the cursing of the evil baron - it echoes in the distance like the hooting of an owl. Also at moonlit nights the carriage and silver harnesses can be clearly seen in the bottom of Lake Verijärv.

The Wandering Lake

LEGEND

Main element: Water

Language of the original: Estonian

Date of origin: 1866

Author: Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald

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

Lake Vahtsõjärv (or another name Paenujärv) is located near the town of Võru.

The activity described in the legend takes place on the shore of the lake and was probably the most prominent object to swear by fake loyalty. Breaking the vow causes chaos in the world order and the lake - water escapes. In the legend, nature reacts actively to human activity, implying that the balance is broken.

Several hundred years ago there was a small lake in the valley with clear silvery water surrounded by green grassy banks. There was a lovely oak wood on the high bank instead of the birch grove and in its shade there stood a big farm showing signs of a well-to-do owner.

The greatest and most beautiful treasure of the farm was the only daughter of the owner who grew up among five strong brothers and bloomed like a most beautiful flower so that there was no other girl to be found anywhere to match her beauty. Many wooers came from

far and near but the maiden had no desire to submit herself to marriage so soon. "I have time enough to get married yet!" she laughed.

One day a young knight of noble birth from the Kirumpää Castle, riding past the farm to Vastseliina, happened to notice the beautiful girl on the shore of the lake. A passion flamed up in his heart so that he could not forget the girl.

He lurked near the lake for several days until at last he found the girl alone and the moment favourable for talking to her and telling her of his heart's desire. Although the maiden felt no love towards him she could not abruptly reject the noble young man who might have caused much harm to her father and brothers because of this. However, the maiden always replied to the knight's entreaty, "Dear Sir, I am not fit to become your wife since you are of noble birth and I just a common farmer's daughter, and I don't have the slightest wish to become your mistress. Therefore I deem it best for you to forget all about me and return to your kin."

One day the two of them were again sitting on the lakeshore in the shade of a big oak-tree. The knight had in his usual way been declaring his ardent love for the maiden, vowing that he would rather die than depart from his love. The maiden replied meekly: "Do not make fun of me! I must not, nor do I want to, believe your vows that have come on the wind and will go with the wind. You will never win my love and let me tell you truthfully, I'd rather give up my life than be dishonoured. I cannot make friends with you."

The knight replied: "Truly, my love for you and you alone will last forever just as this clear lake here in front of our eyes will never

change its place.”

And so he tried again to win the girl’s favour until at last he left sadly for home, angry with himself and the maiden that all his attempts had been in vain.

Great was the fright of the people on the farm the next morning when they no longer found the lake in front of their door but only slime and mud on the damp sand. The maiden raised her eyes towards heaven, remembering the vows of the young man and thanking God for giving her such an evident sign.

Never after that dared the knight come near the farm on the lake-shore where God had thus given ample proof of the falseness of his vows.

Why Tallinn Must Never be Completed

LEGEND

Main element: Water

Language of the original: Estonian

Date of origin: 1866

Author: Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald

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

The legend of Estonian capital Tallinn's flooding by a grey old man living in Lake Ülemiste has obvious connections with relative positions of the town and the lake: the lake on a hill over 36 meters above sea level, so-called Lower Town, on the coastal lowland between the lake and the sea. If lake waters broke through they could easily destroy the town. Records from the 18th and 19th centuries indeed tell us of repeated floods. The first big flood is dated 1867. Modernization of the town's water supply system was in progress: a channel was being dug from Lake Ülemiste to the slope Lasnamägi. The water level in the lake was very high that year. With stormy weather the waves broke through the earthen barrier separating the lake from the channel. The water rushed down the channel cut in the limestone base rock and eroded a deep, wide bed in the sandy surface of Tartu Road. Before long the road was flooded up.

On a dark night every autumn a little grey man comes out from Lake Ülemiste, goes down the hill to the gates of the town and asks the gatekeeper, "Has the town already been completed or is there still something to be built?"

Now, as in most bigger towns, there is never a break in building work, and even if no new houses are in progress there are at least repairs or alterations going on at old ones; so there is never a time when all builders would be idle. And if it should once happen that all building work really stands still this must in no case be disclosed to the man from the lake. Therefore the guards at the gates have been given strict orders always to give the same reply to the old man: "The town is far from being completed, there are many houses to be built yet, and it will take a good many years before all work is finished."

To this the stranger shakes his head angrily, mumbles some words the gatekeeper doesn't understand, faces about and heads back for Lake Ülemiste, his permanent abode.

But if someone should accidentally say in reply to the old man's question that there is no more building to be done in the town, this would mean an end to Tallinn in that very same hour, for Lake Ülemiste would fall with all its waters from the hill of Lasnamägi upon the town and flood it with everything inside.

Melusine

LEGEND

Main element: Water

Language of the original: French

Date of origin: 1833

Author: Édouard d'Anglemont

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

Melusine is a legendary character from medieval literature. She is often depicted as a fairy. She was condemned by her mother to take the form of a serpent, from the waist down, like a mermaid, every Saturday. Antique origins can be attributed to Melusine. However, it is during the Middle-Age, and especially at the end of the 14th century, that Melusine's legend became very popular.

One night, the young Raymondin is riding on his horse through the woods. Earlier that day, he accidentally killed his uncle, the Lord of Poitiers, during a hunting party. The young man is worried he will be hanged when people find out.

On his way, he comes across three beautiful young women, sitting close to a fountain. One of them, Melusine, notices him and asks why he looks so worried. Raymondin tells her the entire story, and Melusine realises that he could be the one who will free her from her terrible destiny.

The beautiful Melusine is doomed to see her legs transform into a snake's tail every Saturday. But if a man agrees to marry her without ever seeing her with her snake's tail, the spell will be broken and the young woman could live like every other girl.

Melusine comforts Raymondin and promises to help him. If he marries her, she will make sure he is cleared of his uncle's murder and will make him rich and powerful. In exchange, he has to promise to never try to see her on Saturdays and never try to discover why she is hiding.

Enchanted by the young girl's beauty, Raymondin accepts the deal right away. The wedding is sumptuous and Melusine keeps her promises. Raymondin is found not guilty of his uncle's death. Melusine also builds magnificent buildings for her husband and gives him ten sons.

However, the couple's happiness provokes envy and makes Raymondin's brother, the Lord of Forez, very jealous. One day, as the latter is visiting the young couple, Melusine leaves and locks herself up in a room as she does every Saturday. The Lord of Forez can't help pointing out the strangeness of the situation to Raymondin. He claims that Melusine hides away every Saturday to meet another man. Raymondin begins to worry and to have doubts about his wife.

Therefore, the following Saturday, Raymondin breaks his promise and tries to eavesdrop at Melusine's door. As he hears nothing but the soft sound of his wife's voice, he then tries to dig a tiny hole into the door with his knife and looks through it. When he sees her in a bath with a snake's tail instead of her legs he shouts:

"Oh Lord, my wife is is a snake!"

Melusine, who catches sight of her husband, lets out a cry of pain and flies away through the window forever turned into a serpent.

Persinette

TALE

Main element: Water

Language of the original: French

Date of origin: 1698

Author: Charlotte-Rose de Caumont La Force

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

***Persinette* is a fairy tale written by the French poet and novelist Charlotte-Rose de Caumont La Force in 1698. Alongside Charles Perrault, she participated to the development of fairy tales in France during the 17th century.**

A husband and his wife want more than anything to have a child. They live next to a mean witch who has a sumptuous garden, protected by huge walls. The pregnant woman feels suddenly compelled to eat some parsley. But parsley is rare in this area and the man is left with no choice but to break into the witch's garden where there is a multitude of herbs and fruits.

The witch catches him stealing parsley and offers him a deal: she'll give him all the parsley he needs, if he will let her have their future baby. The man hesitates at first but ends agreeing in order to fulfil his wife's desires.

When the woman gives birth to a baby girl, the witch comes to take the little girl and calls her "Persinette". The little girl grows up and becomes beautiful. She has extremely long blonde hair that she wears in two long braids.

When Persinette turns twelve, the witch locks her up at the top of a high tower, with no stairs or door but only a small window overlooking the village and the entire forest. Thus, when the witch wishes to join Persinette, she asks the young girl to let down her two long braids through the window and uses them as ropes to climb up the tower.

One day, a young prince, who is wandering through the woods, hears Persinette singing and is immediately enchanted by her soft and beautiful voice. However, he does not find how to get into the tower. Thus, every day, the young man goes to the tower only to hear her sing.

He witnesses, one day, how the witch manages to climb up the tower and decides to try his luck during the night. When he finally enters the tower, Persinette is afraid of this unknown person but the prince reassures her and declares his love. He leaves the princess in the early morning and promises to come the day after. Thus, every night, the prince meets Persinette and their love only grows stronger.

One day, the young girl gets pregnant and is left with no choice to tell the witch, hoping she will allow their relationship. Unfortunately, the witch gets really angry. She cuts Persinette's long braids and sends her far away, to live in a house in a deserted area. There, the young girl gives birth to twins, a boy and a girl.

Then, the witch ties the two long braids to the window to mislead the prince when he comes for Persinette. Thus, when the prince starts to climb up the tower, the witch tells him that he'll never see Persinette again and then cuts the hair. The prince falls several metres down into a bramble bush where he loses his eyesight. Now blind, the prince wanders for years, calling for his beloved one. One day, he finally hears the soft voice of Persinette and follows it until he finds her where she lives with their two children.

Persinette recognizes him and falls into his arms. She weeps with joy and her tears fall into the prince's eyes. He instantly recovers his eyesight. Then, the prince brings Persinette to his kingdom where they lived happily ever after.

The City of Ys

LEGEND

Main element: Water

Language of the original: French

Date of origin: XVth century

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

The legend of the City of Ys is one the most famous maritime legend in France. It is also the most famous legendary story of Brittany. The first mention of the city of Ys goes back to the 15th century. Using the mythical theme of the sunken cities, the legend of the city of Ys was largely Christianized through the years.

Once upon a time, Gradlon the Great, king of Cornwall, married Malgven, goddess of the north. But she died in the open sea giving birth to their daughter, Dahut. Dahut grew up and became very beautiful. She asked her father to build her a city in the heart of the ocean, the wonderful city of Ys. Ys was protected from the sea by solid seawalls. Two enormous doors closed the harbour and only the king had the keys.

The terrible and young Dahut dreamt of a city where happiness, freedom and wealth would prevail.

Dahut gave the city a dragon who seized any passing merchant ships. Thus, the city of Ys got richer and richer, making it the most powerful city in Brittany. The young princess ruled over the city as a true queen. But every night, she brought new lovers to the palace and in the morning she killed them, throwing their corpses over the cliff into the ocean.

One bright morning, a handsome prince, all dressed in red, arrived in the city of Ys. Dahut fell instantly in love with this mysterious man. However, he was the devil in disguise, sent by God, to punish the sinful city. Madly in love, Dahut stole the keys to the city doors from her father, so she could give them to the prince.

The devil opened the enormous doors and the entire ocean rushed into the city, seeping in the streets, carrying the people away. In a few seconds the city was completely drowned.

Only the king, Gradlon, who was a fervent Christian, managed to run away from this disaster with the help of Saint Gwenolé. On his seahorse, he rode with difficulty through the waves, slowed down by a weight. He looked back and saw his daughter holding on to his horse. Under Saint Gwenolé's order, he pushed his daughter away and managed to return to the shore.

Still today, the legend has it that, when the weather is merciful, one can hear the bells of the wonderful city of Ys ringing under the water.

Heracles and the Lernaean Hydra

MYTH

Main element: Water

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 myth about one of Hercules's achievements.

In Argolis there was a lake named Lerna. Ancient Greeks thought that this lake was the border with the underworld, ruled by Hades, god of death. In this lake lived a mythical water creature named the Lernaean Hydra. The Lernean Hydra was shaped like a water snake but she had five or six heads. In the evenings she would leave the river and go into the neighbouring plain, killing and eating the animals. The people living near this river were frightened of encountering this creature because if they cut off one of her heads off, shortly afterwards two more would appear in its place.

Heracles took with him his nephew Iolaus and went to the lake to kill the Lernean Hydra. When they arrived at the lake, the creature went into its underwater lair, among the roots of trees, to hide. Heracles wanted to lure the Lernean Hydra out of the water so he could destroy it. With Iolaus, he lit fire. Heracles asked Iolaus to bring him more wood and tossed the logs into the fire until it was very big.

Heracles put his arrows in the fire to heat them. When the tips of the arrows were red, he shot them one by one in the direction of Lernean Hydra's lair. The mythical creature couldn't take the heat and came out of the water.

Quickly Heracles took an axe and cut off one of its heads. To his surprise two new heads grew in its place. But Heracles was not just fearless and strong, he was clever too. He asked Iolaus to give him a burning firebrand. He told Iolaus to burn the neck stumps each time that he cut off a head, so that no more heads would grow. One by one they cut off the Lernean Hydra's heads and cauterised the wounds. The last head was the biggest one in the middle. Heracles cut it off and buried it deep in the earth so that it could not come back to life again.

Achilles' heel

MYTH

Main element: Water

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 Achilles, the central hero of Homer's *Iliad*, and his immortality and the way he died.

We chose this myth because we believe that it is nice to acknowledge that everyone has a vulnerable point.

In Greek mythology, Achilles was the son of the immortal Nereid Thetis, and Peleus, the king of the Myrmidons. Zeus and Poseidon were rivals for the hand of the beautiful Nereid Thetis, until Prometheus told them a prophecy concerning Thetis. The prophecy said that Thetis would give birth to a boy that would grow to be greater than his father. That was the moment when the two gods stopped their rivalry over Thetis and decided to marry her to the mortal Peleus, the king of the Myrmidons.

Being a son of one mortal and one immortal parent, Achilles was born to be a mortal. When Achilles was just a little baby it was foretold that he would die young. Thetis, his mother, decided to make him invulnerable and washed his whole body, when he was still a

baby, in the waters of the River Styx. The Styx was a river that formed the boundaries between Earth and the Underworld. The River Styx, according to Greek mythology, took its name and its miraculous powers from the daughter of Tethys, Styx. If someone washed their body in the waters of the river, they would become invulnerable. When Thetis washed Achilles' body in the River Styx, she held onto him by his heel. Although the rest of his body was protected, his heel was not. It was the only vulnerable spot in Achilles' body.

Achilles grew up to be a great man and a Trojan War hero, surviving many great battles. Concerning his death there are two versions, but in both of them Achilles dies from a poisoned arrow that hits him in the heel. The first version says that after the gods saw how many men Achilles had killed in war, they decided it was time for him to die. When Paris shot a poisoned arrow, the god Apollo guided it to Achilles' heel. In the other version, Achilles fell in love with one of the Trojan princesses, Polyxeni, and asked his father, Priamos, for permission to marry her. Priamos was willing to give his blessing, because that was a way for the Trojan War to end. He would also have the great warrior, Achilles, by his side. But Polyxeni was the sister of Paris, who had started the Trojan War when he kidnapped the beautiful Helen. If Achilles married Polyxeni, Paris would have to leave Helen and hide in the woods. So Paris shot a poisoned arrow into Achilles' heel as the wedding was taking place, killing him.

Sirens

MYTH

Main element: Water

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 beauty of women.

The first Sirens, according to Greek mythology, were daughters of the god/river Achelous and Muse Melpomene. According to the legend were sea brides and companions of Persephone. When Persephone was kidnapped by Hades, her mother Dimitra gave Sirens their bird wings in order to help them find Persephone. This resulted in them looking like beautiful women with big wings, but despite their beautiful looks, they were malicious creatures.

Sirens were not able to find Persephone and settled down on an island. With their beautiful voices, they attracted sailors from the ships that were approaching their island and then caused their destruction.

Men could not resist them, although they knew that this would be their catastrophe. Sirens could not have children and men that were

mesmerized by their invitation would not be able to have children and based to Ancient Greeks this was worse than death.

When the Trojan War ended, Odysseus was travelling ten years before he arrived in Ithaca. On their travels Odysseus and his companions arrived at the island where the Sirens were living. Sirens used to mesmerize the sailors with their voices so as to bring them closer to them and eventually destroy them. Odysseus in one of his previous stops was informed from Kirki about Sirens and their tactic to lure sailors with their lovely voices and wanted to hear this magical song, but without going to them. When they were approaching the island, Odysseus commanded his companions to clog their ears with wax so they would not be able to hear the song of the Sirens. He also ordered them to tie him to the mast so he could be able to hear their song and not go to them and be eaten alive. Odysseus was mesmerized by their song and was desperately asking his companions to let him go to them, but they tight them tighter as he asked them before arriving at the island. At the end and with the help of his companions Odysseus did not cave in, resulting Sirens to commit suicide.

The Bull

LEGEND

Main element: Water

Language of the original: Italian

Date of origin: *The Bull* a popular tale, first written in 1881 by the writer Ghirardi. From that moment on, the bull officially became a symbol of freedom, power and determination, considered virtues of the people living in Turin.

Origin/author of the legend: The author of the legend is unknown because it is part of popular stories transmitted orally, but the first that put it in written form was Antonio Ghirardi, a Salesian religious in 1881.

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

The bull is the symbol of the city of Turin. It is represented not only on the coat-of-arms, but in many places and monuments all over the city: for example, the famous little fountains called “Torets” in green, cast iron, which are two centuries old.

This is a legend about the birth of the name of the city of Turin. According to history, in the area there were already many farmers raising cows and bulls, and the Latin name of the city was Augusta Taurinorum.

Once, Torino (Turin) was a small city and it was surrounded by woods. In these woods lived an enormous snake with many heads who terrorized the citizens and devoured many wayfarers. People were sad and frightened and kept on asking the rulers of the city to do something to get rid of such a beast.

The Council met numerous times without finding a solution. Eventually they decided to offer a rich prize to whoever could suggest the best idea.

No one showed up except a young boy who offered his strongest and prettiest bull to kill the snake. During the night the citizens made the bull drink a lot of wine and water. When he was completely drunk, they brought him into the woods, where the monster was sleeping, and with many furious butts he killed the snake.

In the city there were celebrations, and in gratitude a bull was represented on the municipal coat of arms and the city was named Torino.

The company of rivers

LEGEND

Main element: Water

Language of the original: Italian

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

The River Po is the most important river in Italy. It is the longest river and it passes through all the Northern Italian regions. Turin, in particular, is really proud to be the capital city of the region where the Po is born, but is also aware that Po is so big because of the contribution of many other streams.

Thousands and thousands of years ago, when humans were still living in the trees, there was a group called “the Company of the Rivers”, formed by all the Piedmont’s rivers.

The company assembled once a month to discuss the water situation, time, waterfalls...well, about the rivers’ business, but also to celebrate. They got on well together because they all belonged to the same rank and were of the same importance.

After a long time one of them began to be more powerful than the others because over the years it was growing very long and really big: it was the Po river.

During a meeting this problem was discussed: the Po pointed out that he had become the most powerful among them, and he threatened to unleash pandemonium, unless he was elected king. The meeting ended with the Po as king and other rivers as vassals.

The “vassal” rivers decided to reach an agreement and implement a plan: they would not send any water to the Po river, making it shallow. So this was what they did: without streams the “king” of the rivers would shrink and become just a tiny stream.

At the next reunion, the Po was battered and wasn't arrogant any more. He apologised for his behaviour. Never again, would he break up the union of equals. After swearing an oath, the company celebrated and water returned to the Po river.

Barolo's Castle of Volta

LEGEND

Main element: Water

Language of the original: Italian

Date of origin: The castle was built in the 11th century and the events were set in the 14th century, so the legend could have been originated during the following centuries.

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

Barolo is a pretty village in the Monferrato area: it is a territory rich in beautiful hills where wine has been produced for centuries. Nowadays this area is famous because of tourism focused on wine tasting. The traditional cuisine is good, too, composed mainly of local produce such as nuts, corn flour, cheese, chestnuts, honey, fresh pasta, veal, truffles...

At the beginning of the fourteenth century, a castle rose on Piedmont's hills, among the grapevines and nut trees of Barolo. It was the castle of La Volta, belonging to the marquises of Falletti, who were just ending a war against Matteo Visconti. The inhabitants of those lands were exhausted and, to reward them for the energy they had spent on bringing the victory, it was decided to organize a party inside the castle. The guests were too many for the tiny space, so

some tables were set in the courtyard. It was a warm day in July, so the weather permitted this solution.

The party began and continued happily. The wine from the lands around the castle helped the guests to create a joyful atmosphere.

The celebration continued until the evening when, suddenly, black clouds covered the sky and the summer humidity was interrupted by lightning and thunder. A violent storm struck Barolo and the castle. Running for shelter was useless: the knights and ladies were all washed thoroughly from head to toe!

The guests piled into the dining room on the ground floor, but there were so many that the dinner also had to be served in the main room on the first floor. The soaked guests that had not fitted into the dining room were accommodated in that upper room which had a creaking wooden floor.

Men took off their soaked jackets, while women remained dressed. The storm didn't spoil the guests' mood and food continued to be prepared in the kitchen. Musicians who started playing again and the heat of the fireplace made the party more cheerful and carefree. The heat in the upper room led men to take off their wet trousers so they were dressed only in their underwear. The music and the dancing continued more frantically, the laughter increased and became uncontrollable.

During the dances the women's skirts were continually stepped upon, until one was torn off entirely, leaving the lady in just her underwear. A knight came over to her and jokingly poured some wine between her breasts: everyone laughed and the other ladies wanted

to have the same thing done to them. Some got undressed, others loosened their hair, others sat apart with the knights...

Tempted by so much laughter and by the excitement the guests in the ground-floor dining room joined the party. The number of people increased. Their bodies touched each other during the dances; they frequently fell on top of each other and found themselves half-naked. By now all of the guests were upstairs, drunk and engaged in a wild orgy.

The weight of so many people was too much for the wooden floor which suddenly collapsed! That was the beginning of an enormous disaster: hundreds of bodies were crushed in the rubble, while the shards of wood showering into the fireplace caught light and started an enormous fire. In a few minutes the entire castle had burst into flames. Guests trying to escape stepped on the others, but every attempt to get out was useless. Was this the Hand of God? Or had Satan taken possession of their souls?

Lamias: The Lamia in Love

MYTH

Main element: Water

Language of the original: Spanish

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

The Lamiak are creatures of the Basque mythology: half woman and half animal. They are usually represented with the upper body of a beautiful woman and the lower body of animals such as a duck, goose or fish. They are related to the element of water, as they normally live in rivers, lagoons, caves, springs, streams or ponds. They enjoy combing their long hair with a golden comb and looking at themselves in a mirror by the water. They are usually kind creatures and the only way to enrage them is by stealing their combs. It is also said that they usually carry out other activities such as helping humans spin, building dolmens, bridges and houses, and washing clothes at night. The belief also tells us that Lamias need the help of humans to give birth and that they often fall in love with mortals, although they cannot marry them because they are not allowed in sacred grounds.

The extinction of these fascinating mythological characters is attributed to the construction of hermitages and churches, the ringing of bells and the prayer of believers.

A myth tells that once a young shepherd called Antxon was looking after his sheep on the mountain when he heard a sweet melody. He forgot about his sheep, went to the place where that sound was coming from and found an extraordinarily beautiful woman sitting on a rock by the river, combing her long blond hair with a golden comb.

They fell in love instantly, he asked her to marry him, and she agreed. He ran down to the village full of joy and told his mother what had happened: he had met the most wonderful woman in the world and they were going to marry. The mother was very worried and asked her neighbours for advice. An old man warned her about the strange creature, and advise the young shepherd to look at the maiden's feet before making a decision. "If it's Lamia, her feet will be like ducks'," the man said.

The young man promised he would do as told: he ran to the mountain determined to see his beautiful bride's feet. As she was bathing in the river, playing with the fish, diving in the water like a dolphin, he saw it at a glance: the girl's feet were definitely duck's feet! Caught by a great sadness, the shepherd went back home, lie in bed, and fell very ill. High temperatures were making him delirious: he could even see the face of his beloved and hear his voice calling him: "zatoz, maitea, zatoz" ("come, dear, come"). After that, he never recovered and died of sorrow. On the day of his funeral, the Lamia went to her lover's house, approached the bed, covered him with a gold sheet and kissed his cold lips. She followed the procession to the church, but, as everyone knows, Lamias cannot enter churches, so she returned to the mountain and cried for his lost love. She cried so much that a spring emerged from the place where her tears fell.

The Witch's Golden Hairbrush

LEGEND

Main element: Water

Language of the original: Catalan

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

Once upon a time, there was a family living in a farm near a small village called Argentona. Every day, the daughter milked the cows and the parents travelled to Mataró, a town nearby, to sell it. The girl was engaged to a boy. Very often, he visited her at the farm and some days he stayed the night there. One day, when the father and the mother were selling the milk in that town, the daughter's fiancé went to look for them so that they could go back to the farm together. On the way back, it started to rain heavily and as wild water was running down, the place quickly flooded and dragged the parents and the girl's fiancé down towards the sea.

When the girl found it out, she decided to leave the farm, give it, together with the cows, to the poor and move near Burriac with her aunt, who turned out to be a witch.

The aunt loved her niece very much and as a prove of that love she gave her a magic golden comb.

After a long time, the girl went to live alone, but still close to Burriac. She used to attend witches' gatherings, where they practiced

witchcraft, and rites where they threw goat's hair in large potions to call for rain and bad weather. People called her the Good Woman as she did not want bad weather because of the accident happened to her parents. So, every time she found out the other witches were doing witchcraft with goat's hair to call the rain, she stopped the rain magically, and only during the dry season, she gathered the clouds in Burriac to send them to Argenton, so that people could harvest. People from the area started using the saying "Clouds in Burriac, rain soon".

The Water Lady

LEGEND

Main element: Water

Language of the original: Catalan

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

The context is a pond called *el Salt de la Dona d'Aigua* in the town *Arbúcies*, in the mountain *el Montseny*. The year is unknown.

Legend says that there was a young man, the heir of Can Blanc -a house in Arbúcies- who left home to go hunting. When he was near the pond, the night came, so he decided to rest for a while there because he was tired and he fell asleep. Suddenly, he heard a laughter of the water ladies in the pond. When he tried to see them, they left, except one that fell in love with the man when she saw him. They kept staring at each other and they fell in love.

The heir asked her to marry and she said yes, but he should never say anything about her origins. They married and had a son, a daughter, and a good life. One day, the couple were arguing and he remembered her origins, so she ran to the woods. He regretted saying that and left after her, but it was too late. She would never come back.

The heir was sad about this and tried to take her back, with no success. Someday, when he returned home, he saw his children dressed and the house cleaned. His children told him that their mother had done that. He tried to stay up all night to see his beloved wife, but he never succeeded at it. One day he saw pearls in his daughter's head: they were her mother's tears. From that day on, the family didn't have economic problems again, but the heir never saw the water lady again.

Fisherman

LEGEND

Main element: Water

Language of the original: Slovenian

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

This legend was taken as a motif for his poem “Fisherman” by France Prešeren, a Slovenian poet.

Singing and dancing mermaids have origins in antiquity. The sirens sang so beautifully and enchantingly that they were dangerous to sailors. In mythology, and not only Slovenian mythology, mermaids teach people how to sing and how to dance. Mermaids come from the sea at eleven in the evening and sing for an hour. Men hear them. The mermaids sing so beautifully every man is lured into the water. Men learn how to sing from them. All the beautiful songs sung in churches and other beautiful popular songs were made by mermaids. A young man who is pulled under the water by a mermaid in order to make him her companion will always remain young. (Trstenjak 1859: 5–6).

A young fisherman who had always trusted his guiding star to lead him over the sea suddenly found himself surrounded by several joyful and half-naked mermaids who posed him a number of provocative questions: “Why don’t you look at us? Why does your star stay so far

away from you? Why doesn't she dance with you? She can't be in love with you! Look at us: how joyful we are, how much we want you. You are so cute and smart." The fisherman found their words terribly inviting, so he started rowing violently away to resist the temptation. The poor fisherman probably drowned while he was fleeing from his hopeless love and the impure mermaids. In transactional analysis the fisherman would be torn between his adult and child ego states.

Waterman

MYTH

Main element: Water

Language of the original: Slovenian

Date of origin: 1830

Author: France Prešeren (1800-1849), Slovenian's romantic poet.

Slovenian poet France Prešeren borrowed the motive of this ballad in Johann Weikhard von Valvasor's *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola*. Most probably, the motive also reflects his own experience. *Waterman* was first published in 1830 in *Kranjska čebelica*, Volume 1. In 1985 Jelka Reichman illustrated the story of the conceited Urška in her picture book that has recently been published in miniature form.

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

Once upon a time, there was a beautiful maiden called Urška. She was bright as the morning star and beautiful as the sun. Though in those days Ljubljana had many beauties, there was no maiden, no married woman, no single woman as beautiful as Urška. Many young men were ready to give Urška their heart, but she wanted to have an endless number of suitors. She attracted them, trapped them and rejected them. She knew how to promise and how to refuse, and how to be pleasant and how to be proud. But finally she met one she couldn't resist.

It was on a Sunday afternoon at the Old Market Square. The trumpets and fiddles and zithers all played. Young people danced in the old linden-tree's shade and Urška was their queen. For a long time she did not want to join the dancers. The sun was setting, the shadows were falling. It was seven o' clock when Urška finally decided to dance. She chose a handsome young man and sent him a look of love. When the young man saw this he approached the maid: "Do you wish to dance?" he asked. "Where the Sava's swift waters with the Danube's are stirred, I first heard of your great beauty this morning. I have not danced yet. So, come, waste no time now, just give me your hand. The sun is going down and the dance soon will end!"

The handsome young man gave Urška his hand and they danced like the wind. They did not even touch the floor. The bystanders stared. The wind whistled around, the sky was threatening loaded with clouds. "Just speedily, speedily make your feet hasten," cried the young man and they disappeared into the dark waters.

Water sprite in the Bohinj Lake

LEGEND

Main element: Water

Language of the original: Slovenian

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

Superior to all other water animals and also to water fairies or mermaids, water sprites were believed to live in an underwater castle. Slovenian fairy tales describe the castle as a wonderful palace, full of jewels, with halls illuminated by golden fish. Water sprites in Slovenian folklore are related to Poseidon of antiquity or the Roman Neptune, god of water and the sea. People's imagination provided stories about water sprites living in every stream and in every pond.

Once upon a time there lived a water sprite in the Bohinj lake. He was longing to get married, but no girl dared join him in his wet and humid underwater castle, although it was full of jewels and large, bright halls. Finally, he kidnapped a young and kind laundress who was washing linen in the lake. They got married and his wife gave birth to three children. He took good care of her, and loved her dearly. Nevertheless, she was getting ever more depressive and homesick. When she asked him again to let her go, he agreed, but on

condition that they split their children into two equal halves. What happened next, nobody knows.

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