

## From myth to story

### Turn mythological creatures into unforgettable characters

Most mythological creatures are reduced to clichés.

Vampires drink blood. Werewolves howl at the moon.

But what if that's not the real story?

Too often writers end up copying existing versions of these creatures — not because they lack creativity, but because they never go deeper than the surface. This creates characters that feel flat — because there's nothing left to discover. There's nothing new. Nothing exciting. Nothing that makes us wonder.

### Why most mythological creatures feel lifeless

Most writers don't create mythological creatures — they reuse them.

Not intentionally, but by relying on what's already familiar.

And they never go deeper than the surface.

When a creature is only defined by what it does, it becomes predictable. And when it's predictable, it loses its impact.

Because readers aren't drawn to creatures.

They're drawn to characters.

A character is more than a set of traits.

It's a story waiting to unfold — whether you write it or not.

### The method that turns creatures into characters

Most writers start with what a creature is.

But unforgettable characters are not built from the outside in — they're built from the inside out.

To turn a mythological creature into a character people remember, you need to go deeper.

You need to understand three things:

- Where it comes from
- What it represents
- Who it is

This is what I call the 3-layer method.

## **Layer 1: Origin – Where does it come from?**

Every mythological creature comes from somewhere.

Not just geographically, but culturally.

It was created in a specific time, by specific people, for a reason.

And that reason matters.

Because myths were never just stories. They were explanations. Warnings. Reflections of fear, belief, and survival.

When you understand where a creature comes from, you begin to understand why it exists.

And once you understand that...

You're no longer copying the creature.

You're rebuilding it.

Most writers skip this step.

They take the creature as it is, without ever asking:

- Where did it originate?
- What culture shaped it?
- What purpose did it serve?

Without these answers, the creature becomes hollow.

Let's take the vampire as an example.

The modern vampire is seductive, immortal, and powerful.

But the early vampire myths were very different.

They were often tied to disease, death, and the fear of the unknown.

Something was wrong in the village. People got sick. And no one understood why.

So, they created a monster to explain it.

The vampire wasn't just a creature.

It was fear given a form.

If you only use the modern version, you get a stereotype.

If you understand the origin, you get something much more powerful.

## **Layer 2: Meaning – What does it represent?**

A creature is never just a creature.

It represents something.

Fear. Desire. Power. Loss. Control. Transformation.

Mythological beings are shaped by human emotions – and that's what makes them feel real.

Because at the core, they are not monsters.

They are reflections.

When you understand what a creature represents, you stop seeing it as something external.

You start seeing it as something human.

And that's where it becomes interesting.

Because readers don't connect with what's different.

They connect with what feels familiar – even when it wears a monstrous face.

Take the vampire again.

On the surface, it feeds on blood.

But what does that actually represent?

Hunger. Addiction. Obsession. Control.

The vampire doesn't just consume.

It needs.

And that can be twisted into anything.

Love. Power. Survival.

Suddenly, the creature isn't just dangerous.

It's understandable.

And the moment a creature becomes understandable...

It becomes unforgettable.

If you only focus on what a creature does, you create something shallow.

If you understand what it represents, you create something human.

### **Layer 3: Character – Who are they in your story?**

This is where everything changes.

Because this is where the creature stops being a concept...

And becomes a character.

Once you understand where the creature comes from, and what it represents, you're no longer limited by existing versions.

**Now you can ask the only question that really matters:**

Who are they?  
Not as a species.  
Not as a myth.  
But as someone.

What do they want?  
What are they afraid of?  
What are they willing to do to get what they need?  
Because this is where your character is shaped.  
Not by the myth.

But by the choices.

A vampire driven by hunger is predictable.  
A vampire trying to resist that hunger?  
That's conflict.  
A vampire who feeds to survive is one thing.  
A vampire who feeds because they enjoy it?  
That's something else entirely.  
Same creature.  
Different characters.

The myth gives you the foundation.  
But the character is built through decisions.  
If you stop at the myth, you create something familiar.  
If you build a character, you create something memorable.

Now you have all three layers:

- Origin – where it comes from
- Meaning – what it represents
- Character – who it is

And when these work together...

You don't just have a character.

You have something your reader will remember.

## **Try it yourself**

Choose a mythological creature.

It can be anything – a vampire, a fae, a werewolf... or something less familiar.

Now, instead of describing what it is, build it using the three layers.

1. Origin – Where does it come from?
  - What culture or belief is it tied to?
  - What was the original purpose of the myth?
  - What problem did it explain?
2. Meaning – What does it represent?
  - What emotion or idea does it reflect?
  - Fear? Desire? Control? Loss?
  - What makes it human?
3. Character – Who are they?
  - What do they want?
  - What are they afraid of?
  - What choices do they make?

Don't aim for perfection.

You're not trying to get it "right".

You're trying to go deeper.

If you can answer these three layers...

You're no longer working with a creature.

You're creating a character.

## **What comes next?**

Now you have the foundation.

You know how to take a mythological creature and turn it into something more than a stereotype.

Something with depth. Meaning. Identity.

But this is just the beginning.

Because creating a single character is one thing.

Building a world where they belong?

That's something else entirely.

If you want to go deeper – into character development, worldbuilding, and creating stories that feel alive – you'll find more guides, insights, and tools on my site.

Because the best stories don't just use myths.

They transform them.

Keep an eye on your inbox – I'll be sharing more soon.

*Belinda Scarlett*