

Type responses directly onto this form, single-spaced
****Preserve numbering & prompts, but delete unused spaces****
50 points for completion & review—NO PARTIAL CREDIT

1. Using complete sentences, answer the following questions regarding a mythic story told to and by characters described in one of the assigned primary sources for **Units 1 & 2**, as **described in the on-line list of sample stories**. ****CAUTION**** analysis of stories not included in the on-line list will **receive only minimal credit**; check http://www.csus.edu/indiv/d/duboisj/WM/WM_stories.html.

IMPORTANT: Provide page number citations in parentheses—for example, “Villa describes the Mayans at the ball court” (85)--**even if you don't quote your source directly**.

(a) Storytelling Context (1-2 sentences for each):

- By what person(s) is **the story told** and/or dramatized? (name & features)
The story of Sean Michael’s rescue at Roan Inish is told by the grandfather, a gray-haired man with a beard and cap, who speaks with a traditional Irish accent. (counter #: 13:30)
- **Who hear(s) the story** &/or sees it dramatized? (name & features)
Fiona, the young blond girl who has come to live with her grandparents after the death of her mother, and her grandmother both listen to the story. (counter #: 13:40)
- In what **space(s) & surroundings** & at what **precise time(s)** is the story told/dramatized?
All three sit in the kitchen of the grandparent’s home, away from the city shown earlier in the countryside of Ireland. It is the afternoon just after her arrival, with light still coming in through the window. The time period is not specified, but the workshop scenes and boats shown in earlier parts of the film suggest it is mid-20th century. (counter #: 12-13)
- what **actions** (especially ritual) **lead up to, accompany & follow** the story's telling/enactment?
Prior to the storytelling, the film shows the funeral of Fiona’s mother, brief scenes of her life in the city wandering around her father’s workshop, and her boat trip to her grandparents, during which she spots a seal looking at her from a nearby rock. After the story is told, the next day Fiona & her grandfather are out preparing to tar his boat and he tells the story of her brother Jaimie’s disappearance at sea the day that the family was moving off the island of Roan Inish; and after that she asks to go see the island. Though there are no formal rituals associated with the story, the family sitting around the kitchen table is a customary setting for storytelling. (counter # 2:30-11, 18:20-29)

(b) Summary: in your own words, what are the key elements of the story? (4-6 sentences)

The film’s depiction of the story shows Sean Michael, whom grandfather introduces as his own great great grandfather, as a young man being teased for speaking Irish at school and then sent home, disappointing his father’s hopes that he would become educated. While out fishing, he and the other men of the family are caught in a storm and all their boats capsize. “Experienced sailors know not to struggle,” says the grandfather, but Sean Michael does and the sea “spits him out:” he is found unconscious by a group of women on the shore of Roan Inish, a small island off the coast. They warm his body for many days by tying him to a cow and finally awakes, reporting that a seal came to his rescue and he rode it to the mainland. (counter #: 13:50-18:20)

(c) **Influence**: what event, series of related events, or habitual practice most powerfully demonstrates the sustained influence of the story summarized in (b) on the storyteller(s) &/or listeners described in (a)? **Explain** what is powerful, specifying **how the story inspires & guides actions**.

This story is the first of three that influence Fiona to explore Roan Inish and to investigate rumors that Jamie is still alive. As noted in 1(a), just after hearing the story of Sean Michael she hears the story of Jamie's disappearance; later, after exploring Roan Inish and finding signs that someone has been there recently, a dark haired fisherman who tells her the story of a young man from Roan Inish who married a Selkie (half-seal/half-woman), as a way to account for why some in her family have dark hair and eyes. All these stories fuel her determination to search for Jamie, and in the end she is instrumental in getting him to separate from his seal guardians and return to the family. (counter #s: 19:15, 45:20, 84:45)

(d) **Reflection**:

- what other details about the storytelling might help an unfamiliar reader imagine it?

Sean Michael is shown in the story as having dark traits just like Jaimie, which becomes significant later when Fiona hears the Selkie story. After the story is told and throughout the story, Fiona's grandmother worries that she is hearing about too many strange things and worries about what effect such stories may have on her.

- which details in 1(a)-(d) would most help an unfamiliar reader imagine the storytelling?

I think that imagining the setting in the kitchen of a house in the countryside, near the shore across from Roan Inish, is important to understanding the power of the story, and also knowing that the grandfather is clearly still feeling angst about having to leave Roan Inish years earlier.

2. Highlight similarities & differences between the modern storytelling situation described in 1(a)-(c) and several older, more widely told mythic stories and/or related ritual traditions **from the same unit & the same culture**.

Illustrate these similarities & differences by selecting and commenting on paraphrasing three (3) distinct sets of details (story characters & events OR ritual participants & actions) from at least two **assigned, non-fiction sources (SHM, on-line EB listings, and/or ethnographic chapters in CP)**

(a) source: Short History of Myth p.#: 29-30, 32-33

setting in which story or ritual/custom takes place & **characters or people** involved:

Armstrong generically describes hunters telling stories about spiritual connection to the animals they saw taking their last breaths during the hunt; later she mentions a cave at Lascaux with painted figures resembling animals as well as humans wearing animal masks, where initiates in such hunting lore may have gone for initiation.

objects & actions involved in ritual/custom OR **events** in the story plot:

The paintings may have served some role to initiate young boys as hunters; Armstrong does not specify a specific story, but offers more of a conjecture about the reasons why hunters needed myths about animals to make sense of what they had to do.

similarities with 1(a)-(b): in both storytelling traditions, a young person is being initiated via a story about the secret power of a sacred animal. Both Sean Michael and the hunter initiates that Armstrong describes learned that animals which are sometimes hunted can also be befriended.

contrasts with 1(a)-(b): the story of Sean Michael makes no mention of seals being hunted; the Selkie story that Fiona later hears makes reference to some people harming seals, but it's not clear how widespread this was. Also Fiona is not being initiated into any kind of hunting, though she is going to be searching for her lost brother and the story helps her in that quest.

(b) source: EB: "animals, master of the" p.#: 1

setting in which story or ritual/custom takes place & **characters or people** involved:

The article describes a ceremony (conducted presumably by hunters) or a shaman ("a religious personage with healing & psychic transformation powers") placating the "master of the animals" (see below). No specific setting is mentioned but I would assume it would be somewhere linked to the sacred animal's natural habitat.

objects & actions involved in ritual/custom OR **events** in the story plot:

The article mentions the seal as one of the possible species ("usually a large animal of economic or social importance to the tribe) over which a supernatural "master of animals" has control. The ceremony or shaman is needed to remove the offense of this master withholding game when an animal has been improperly slain.

similarities with 1(a)-(b): This widespread mythological/ritual tradition suggests that some common spirit force—perhaps the sea?—sends seals to help people; the story of Jamie being raised by seals suggests that such a force is deeper than the action of any single seal.

contrasts with 1(a)-(b): as noted in 2(a), Sean Michael is not hunting seals and indeed doesn't necessarily seem to be conscious that he can call on their help; one just turns up to help. Fiona may at some point be calling inwardly to seals for help but it isn't so she can kill them! Though it may be that her attentiveness is what leads to the seals helping to return Jamie to his family.

(c) source: Short History of Myth p.#: 27-28

setting in which story or ritual/custom takes place & **characters or people** involved: Armstrong describes shamans receiving guidance from animal spirits, but does not specify any setting for their doing so; presumably they would do so through some ritual, perhaps away from the tribe.

objects & actions involved in ritual/custom OR **events** in the story plot: As in (c), the story is describe only generally: shamans seek the guidance of some important animal in order to be able to move and influence other beings in the spirit world.

similarities with 1(a)-(b): Sean Michael receives guidance from a seal, and the later story of the Selkie, as well as Jamie's connection with seals, suggests that they have been assisting certain visionary residents of Roan Inish for generations. Fiona too feels some connection to them.

contrasts with 1(a)-(b): Neither Sean Michael, the young man who marries a Selkie, or Fiona have a strictly shamanic role in their communities, though Fiona does lead others to pay attention to clues about Jamie's survival.

(d) What other details about these stories/rituals might help an unfamiliar reader understand them?

The EB article describes the master of animals “releasing” a certain number of animals to be killed, whose souls return to the master once they are killed and give a report of their treatment. While none of this applies to the Sean Michael story since no seals are killed, it gives some sense of the complexity of the logic of such mythic traditions.

Which details in 2(a)-(d) might best help an unfamiliar reader understand the stories/rituals?

The Lascaux cave paintings (2a) and the above description of master of the animals (2d) seem most vivid; Armstrong’s descriptions are psychologically rich but skimpy on details.

3. Compare & contrast the storytelling analyzed in #1 to your own storytelling experience. (20 points)

(a) similarities between relevant **details of your story** (describe) & the story summarized in 1(b):

My own story tells about my grandfather meeting my grandmother and moving from a small village to a larger city in Belgium, and also gaining higher status first through training as a doctor, and then in government administration after World War II. Like Fiona’s grandfather’s story of Sean Michael, my story recounts family history, explaining how a descendant’s fortune changed greatly, which influenced the fate of future generations. Sean Michael’s “landing” at Roan Inish led to the family settling there; and my grandfather’s move to the city and a specialized profession led to education being highly valued in my family.

contrasts between the **details of your story** (describe) vs. the story summarized in 1(b):

My grandfather’s move to the city contrasts starkly with Sean Michael settling on the remote site of Roan Inish; my grandfather’s success in getting an education contrasts with Sean Michael’s failure to do so.

(b) similarities between the space(s)/surroundings, audience(s), gestures and facial expressions accompanying your own story’s telling & the storytelling context described in 1(a): Like Fiona’s grandfather, I have been telling my story to my own family around the kitchen table. Also like him, I don’t use dramatic gestures, but rather alternate gazing into my nine-year-old son’s eyes and staring off into the distance, imagining the scenes I describe; I too hint at a deep connection to a homeland that I have left. Like Fiona feeling a connection to an ancestor who brought her family to Roan Inish, my son (who is named after my grandfather) feels a connection to his namesake, an ancestor who enabled his descendants to settle into a new way of life.

contrasts between the space(s)/surroundings, audience(s), gestures and facial expressions accompanying your own story’s telling vs. the storytelling context described in 1(a): I don’t live in the countryside, a short boat ride away from the place I describe, and my audience consists of my own children. My face is probably more animated and less wrinkled than the grandfather’s.

(c) What insights have you gained about the storytelling in #1 & 2 from the above comparison? (Even if your storytelling is very different, note realizations gained from that difference.)

I’ve realized how important family stories are and how much they draw members of the family closer together. On one level, “Secret of Roan Inish” is about the relationship between humans, seals and other animals, on another level it’s about the power of stories to help a family process the ups and downs in its fortunes. I now realize that my own stories can do that too.

Which details in 3(a)-(c) might best help an unfamiliar reader understand your comparison? I’ve been telling my story in episodes, one bit at a time, which is also different from the story

Fiona hears, although she hears other related stories in installments later in the film. Also my son doesn't necessarily sit still for as long as Fiona, though he does stay interested for a while.

SUMMARY & INSIGHTS GAINED FROM #1-3 (20 points)

- (a) Review the section on the analogy between stories & maps in “Myths, Stories & Reality.” Then create a **diagram, doodle, or concept map** that illustrates & visually compares the way the storytelling activities described in #1-3 provide maps that guide people's thoughts & actions.

(NOTE: digital images &/or graphics must be **integrated into an original layout** to receive credit.)

- (b) Comment on the insights reflected in the above diagram, addressing both

- parallels between mythic stories and maps --> Fiona's story “map” includes Roan Inish's past and connects it to the present via symbolic objects — Jamie's cradle (linked to the Selkie woman & to Jamie's dark features) and the buildings left on Roan Inish — as well as the presence of the sea and the seals who still interact with humans on the island. My “map” includes sites linked to my grandfathers' life, especially the country home where I spent so much time with him and the railroad lines we traveled to get there; these will come to life when I take my son back to see them one day, though in the meantime the traits he & my grandfather share are also part of the “map.”
- the way mythic stories guide people's thoughts and actions --> both story “maps” motivate those who hold them in mind to investigate the realities that they depict; but more specifically they provide explicit direction in specific situations, as when Fiona follows seals to find Jamie and when (in the future) my son Theodore might decide what he wants to see when he visits Belgium.

- (c) progress made so far this semester (course objectives/ my hopes/goal(s))-->**see attached**