

# **The Big Myth: An Animated CD-Rom and Website on World Religions and Ancient Cultures**

*Name of organisation:*  
**Distant Train**

## **THE BIG MYTH: HOW TO USE THIS SITE**

This site is designed to fit in with the classical mythology or world cultural studies program within the general curriculum. There are a variety of ways to use the site both in and out of the classroom, as a supplement, as an alternative textbook or in a computer lab at school as a group activity.

'The Big Myth' is a collection of cross-cultural world creation myths, designed for comparative study. Each myth is animated using Flash technology, so it is important that the school or home accessing the site has a browser (Netscape Navigator or Internet Explorer) of 3.0 or higher, as well as the Shockwave Player Plug-In, which is free to download on the Macromedia site. One of the most important aspects of this site is to introduce children to the web, and allow them to feel comfortable with the internet as a tool for research, inspiration and creative learning.

**THE MYTHS:** Students click on a country on the world map, which brings them to a page where they can choose to see the creation myth of that region, the pantheon of the gods of that culture, and a bit of background information on the culture itself- the history as well as about the people today. Once the students have gone through all three sections, they are lead to a series of exercise questions, research questions and ideas for class projects. This section is much like an accompanying workbook which can be turned in to the teacher as homework or classwork, either in the form of a printout, or on-screen. Teachers have the option of looking at these lessons directly, from the previous page in the Teachers' Section.

**WRITE YOUR OWN MYTH:** One of the most exciting aspects of the study of world mythology is the effect it has on the creativity of a young person. This section is a basic write-in form, where students can send in their original stories to 'The Big Myth' webmaster. The webmaster will read the e-mails and post them online under The Gallery of Answers.

**CHAT:** The Chat Room is the place for students to meet. Students can log on and enter the room, and can find themselves in the Roman Forum, an ancient Japanese temple, in a Hieroglyphic-filled pyramid chamber, or on the top of an Aztec Ziggurat (the various locations will rotate over time). Rooms can hold up to six chatters at any time, and communication is all live (in real time). Young people can meet here to develop international friendships- ideally it is a place to discuss mythology among peers, but realistically it will be the area for them to unwind and socialize, and meet a variety of other children from other cultures also involved in the study of ancient mythology.

**DISCUSSION FORUM :** This page resembles a 'letters to the editor' section of a magazine. A question for general discussion based on one of the myths is posted on a rotating basis on this page, and below that is an e-mail response form. It's open to all who wish to comment- anyone with an answer to the question can write in. The Webmaster receives these letters and chooses the best of each month to publish online on a rolling basis - thus the children can see their results within a week of their writing in. A teacher using this site may well wish to incorporate follow-up classroom discussion around these rotating topics.

**LINKS AND BIOGRAPHY:** This section is a list of further links to outside sites of interest for students doing research projects for which they will need a broader base of information. All sites pertain to world mythology and the study of international cultures. They are listed by age group,

area of focus and region. If students are collecting ideas for their own myths, it can be an excellent place to find wider inspiration. In addition there is a list of the hard-copy texts used during the creation of this website.

### **USING SEARCH ENGINES**

The Internet is a vast, disorganized library containing information on every imaginable subject. There are tens of millions of websites at this point and new sites are launched every hour. The number of websites has grown faster over the years than can be documented and therefore the best means of finding what one is looking for is by using search engines.

There are many good search engines online. Almost all the research for 'The Big Myth' was carried out online using search engines. It is a vital part of the learning process for the students to find original material about the cultures they are studying online; much of what they might find is written by the indigenous peoples themselves.

#### **Some common search engines:**

**Yahoo** (<http://www.yahoo.com>) - one of the very first and still very thorough

**Google** (<http://www.google.com>) - a newer search engine which has recently become very popular

**Northern Light** (<http://www.northernlight.com>) - a good general search page

**Alta Vista** (<http://www.altavista.com>)- here one can search specifically for images and sound files

**Excite** (<http://www.excite.com>) - searches by concept rather than keyword

**HotBot** (<http://www.hotbot.com>) - has some unique features including sorting results by date or type

**Lycos** (<http://www.lycos.com>) - one of the oldest search tools on the Internet

To find a website about a specific subject, type a few keywords into the search field. The best keywords combine terms that are uncommon, such as "maori music". Very common words such as 'of' or 'is' are largely ignored. Place the main subjects first and be as accurate as possible. If the search is for more than one word, it is best to put them in quotes or parentheses.

Often the engines will come back with search results with thousands of website pages. Most search engines, however, allow you to narrow your search by searching further within the results.