Fables, Tall Tales, Fairy Tales, Myths, and Legends
Fables

- **Definition**: A brief story that sets forth some pointed statement of truth

- **Origin**: Found in almost every country
  - Handed down from generation to generation as oral literature

- **Content**: Usually contains incidents that relate to the unusual, sometimes supernatural
  - Contains a moral

- **Characters**: Often animals or plants given human qualities, but people and supernatural figures may appear

- **Structure**: Lacks development of characters

- **Examples**: Aesop’s fables, The Tortoise and the Hare
Tall Tale

**Definition**: story with unbelievable elements, related as if it were true and factual

**Origin**: American folk literature
- Oral tradition and contests

**Content**: Based on hard-working people
- Bragging and exaggeration – HYPERBOLE
- Humorous or witty
- Seemingly impossible feats

**Characters**: people, fictional characters
- Told to make the narrator seems as if he/she was part of the story

**Examples**: Paul Bunyan, Davy Crockett, Johnny Appleseed
Fairy Tales and Folk Tales

• **Definition**: fictional story that may feature folkloric characters and enchantments

• **Origin**: almost all cultures
  – Oral tradition and then written and recorded

• **Content**: Associated with children

• **Characters**: fairies, goblins, elves, trolls, giants, gnomes, talking animals, princes, princesses, witches, wicked stepmothers, fairy godmothers, etc.

• **Structure**: Contains elements of plot

• **Examples**: Cinderella, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, etc.
Myths

• **Definition**: a sacred narrative explaining how the world and humankind came to be in their present form

• **Origin**: Almost all cultures
  – Passed through oral tradition

• **Content**: Closely linked to religion and the explaining of why something is; establishes models for behavior

• **Characters**: Gods or supernatural heroes

• **Structure**: Elements of plot, personification

• **Examples**: Greek mythology, Roman mythology
Legends

- **Definition**: a narrative of human actions that are perceived both by teller and listeners to take place within human history and to possess certain qualities that give the tale truth

- **Origin**: found in almost all cultures
  - Passed on through oral tradition

- **Content**: occurrence of miracles

- **Characters**: real people going through imaginary events

- **Structure**: Includes element of plot

- **Examples**: Beowulf, Robin Hood