

SOURCE 11

‘Many years ago, all the country round about Stokesay belonged to two giants, who lived, the one upon View Edge, and the other at Norton Camp. Most likely they were brothers, for the land belonged to them both alike, and so did the money. They kept all their money locked up in a big oak chest in the vaults under Stokesay Castle, and when either of them wanted any of it he just took the key and got some out, and took the key back with him. And then if the other one wanted it, he shouted to his brother on the other side to throw it to him, and then he went down and got some; and so they went on, throwing the key backwards and forwards just as they happened to want it. But at last, one day, one of them wanted the key, and the other had got it, so he shouted out to him to throw it over as they were used to doing; and he went to throw it, but somehow he made a mistake and threw too short, and dropped the key into the moat down by the castle. They tried every way to find it, but they never did, and there it lies now at the bottom of the pool somewhere. Many have been to look for it, quite of late years even, but it has never been found. And the chest of treasure stands in the vaults still, so they say, but nobody can get into it, for there is a great big raven always sitting on the top of it, and he won’t let anybody try to break it open. So no one will ever be able to get the giants’ treasure until the key is found, and many say it never will be found. Let folks try as much as they please.’

This extract is from C.S. Burne ed. *Shropshire Folklore: A sheaf of gleanings* (London, 1863), pp. 7–8. It is one version of an old Shropshire myth about two giants who supposedly live on the hills either side of Stokesay Castle and keep their treasure at Stokesay Castle.



SELF-LED ACTIVITY

DIY FOLK TALES



KSI-2

Recommended for

KSI-2
(History, English, Art)

Learning objectives

- Explore some of the folklore associated with Stokesay.
- Use the story of the giants and raven at Stokesay as inspiration for story writing and shadow puppetry.

Time to complete

45–60 minutes



The giant of the eastern hill from the well-known Stokesay myth.



The giant of the western hill.

SUMMARY

Since prehistoric times, myths have been created by people to help make sense of the natural world. Different myths are unique to local areas and get passed down generations, often by word of mouth, so details of the story sometimes get lost or changed.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Use Source 11 (on page 53) as an exemplar to list the ingredients that go into making a myth:

- Places people know (e.g. the hill at View Edge).
- Supernatural or animal characters (e.g. giants and ravens).
- Magical events (e.g. throwing the key between hills).
- Special objects (e.g. treasure chest).
- Open-ended narrative (e.g. 'many say it never will be found').

Now ask students to use this list as the basis for writing their own myth with original characters and events.

Next, get students to tell their stories using shadow puppetry. You'll need: a white sheet, a torch, thin card, split pins, sticky tape and straws. Students should cut out shapes from the card to represent settings and characters, then articulate the characters' limbs using split pins. They should stick straws to the back of their shapes to turn them into puppets. Get students to perform their stories behind a white sheet, with the lights off except a torch for back-lighting.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

A riddle map based on the giants' myth has been developed for families visiting Stokesay Castle. It is aimed at 8–10 year olds and can be done in groups of four or five with a supervising adult. If you think this resource might suit your students, please ask for copies at the visitor centre.

There are two routes around the castle, each following a different giant from the story to solve riddles and eventually help him find the lost key. Both routes start at the bag storage room in the gatehouse. You could split your class into two, with half going one way and half going the other.