

The myth of the Giant's Causeway



Literacy – Fiction and Poetry:
Traditional stories, myths and legends

The Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland is one of our planet's great natural wonders. It's so unusual that visitors from all over the world come to see it. It's made of nearly 40,000 columns of solidified volcanic lava (basalt) and most of them are hexagonal! Experts say the volcanic eruption happened around 60 million years ago.

In centuries past, people were baffled because they had no idea how the strange rocks had been formed. Local people had heard reports of similar odd rocks on the Scottish island of Staffa and so, over the years, a legend was created...

The Tale of Finn McCool

A long, long time ago, when fierce giants roamed the world, Finn McCool and his wife Oonagh lived in Ireland. One day, a Scottish giant called Benandonner challenged Finn to a trial of strength. Now, Finn was strong and brave but he wasn't a great swimmer. So he gathered all the rocks he could find and built a huge bridge across the sea to Fingal's Cave in Staffa, where Benandonner lived.

After all the building work, poor Finn was so tired that he curled up in his bed and fell fast asleep. Benandonner would have to wait till tomorrow! But Benandonner was impatient and marched across the causeway to Ireland to fight Finn.

When Oonagh saw Benandonner coming, she realised that her husband was in terrible danger. In a flash of inspiration, she threw a blanket over Finn and put a bonnet on his head. When Benandonner arrived, bellowing his terrible war cry, Oonagh bravely went out to meet him. "Shush" she snapped, "you'll wake the baby!" She pretended to be very cross.

Benandonner crouched down and peered into Finn's hut. There he saw a huge baby lying in bed and he panicked. "If that's their baby," he thought, "then Finn must be MASSIVE!" Quick as a flash, he was off, back over the sea to his cave, ripping the causeway up as he ran in case Finn should follow him. And that's how the Giant's Causeway got its name.

Marvellous myths and loopy legends

In the old days, people told fantastic stories to explain things they didn't understand. The Giant's Causeway is just one example. Now it's your turn to write a story about something mysterious. It could be a famous landmark, such as Stonehenge or Hadrian's Wall, or you could choose something more modern like the Blackpool Tower.

