



Use a Myth

'I had no talent for story-writing myself and for that reason I took ready-made stories that I knew by heart – those of Aesop ...'

Socrates

My favourite myths are the Greek myths, among the most ancient stories in the world. Their authors are long dead and won't mind if you borrow those stories and make them new. George Bernard Shaw wrote a play called *Pygmalion*, in which he reimagined a king from Greek mythology as an Englishman called Professor Higgins. King Pygmalion carves a statue of his ideal woman and Henry Higgins does a makeover on a poor London girl who sells flowers. Later they made the play *Pygmalion* into an Oscar-winning movie musical called *My Fair Lady*. This way of coming up with an idea can work especially



well with ancient myths from different cultures. As Rick Riordan does in his Percy Jackson books, you can set the myth in a modern setting. Or you can embed the myth deep in the story. I consciously worked a Greek myth into my seventeen Roman Mysteries. Each of those books included elements, themes, names and even plot points from the myth. For example, *The Twelve Tasks of Flavia Gemina* uses the Hercules myth. You can also use fairy tales, fables and folk tales. You can even use Shakespeare: the Oscar-winning musical *West Side Story* is *Romeo and Juliet* set in modern times.

