



4 Oral Storytelling: Mount Karthala

Background:

In East Africa, oral literature is not just a means of recounting legends and myths or reminding us of the sanctity of the environment: storytelling is another way to socialise and connect communities.

This is practiced across various countries including the Comoros archipelago (four green volcanic islands off the coast of East Africa). Comorian folklore presents a unique blend of Bantu and Islamic oral traditions interwoven into the history and landscape of the islands

Here's one interesting story about the creation of Grande Comore (Ngazidja), the largest of the islands:



Grande Comore

What is Mount Karthala?

Mount Karthala is an active volcano on Grande Comore with eruptions happening roughly every 11 years.



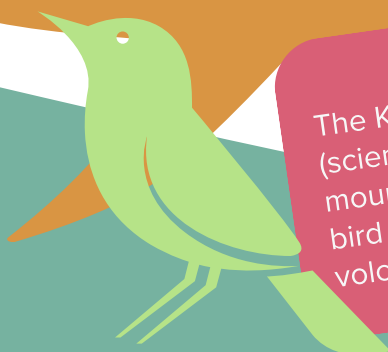
Mount Karthala
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Long, long ago King Solomon fell in love with the Queen of Sheba and wanted to gift her a ring. He sent a *jinni* (genie or spirit) to deliver the jewel for the ring, but suddenly, it was dropped in the Indian Ocean.

- When it reached the depths of the ocean, a formidable volcanic eruption occurred! Once the eruption ceased and the smoke had cleared, all that remained was Karthala and the new green island formed around it. King Solomon, in his anger, proclaimed that there will always be eruptions from Karthala until the end of time...

Fun Fact!

The Karthala white-eye (science name: *zosterops mouroniensis*) is a small bird that lives on this volcanic mountain.



Activity 1 : Let's Explore!

Landscape myths can help us to feel more connected to places that are important to us. Think of a place of nature that is special to you. It could be your garden, the park or even a botanical garden. Do you ever wonder how this place might have come to be?

In this activity, I invite you to go outside and create your own exciting story of how your special place came to be. This is a good way to connect yourself to your community and nature as well as create a time and space to relax and have fun.

What you will need

- A location
- Friends and/or family

Method

1. Pick an outdoor location to explore with your friends and family.

2. Begin to imagine what this place could have looked like before.

3. How do you think the place has transformed? Go outside with your friends and family and begin to interact with your environment. Here are a few prompts to get you thinking about your location



USEFUL PHRASES

Long, long ago...
Once upon a time...
Not so long ago...
One fine day...
Suddenly...
Eventually...
At last...

4. Now come up with your own story of how this place came to be. Your story could focus on the entire location or maybe you would like to focus on something specific that you have noticed...



Suitable for
all ages
Time: 15-30
minutes



NOTE

The activity is best undertaken with others so that they can share the story or create one together.

PROMPTS

What can you see?
What sounds can you hear?
Is there a specific smell in the air?
How do the different natural materials feel?
How does this place make you feel?

Bonus Activity

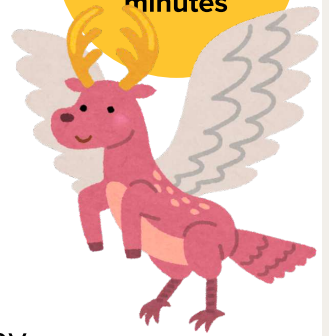
Why not write the story or record yourself retelling the story?



Activity 2: Make Your Own Island

In this activity, I invite you to create your very own island! This is a chance for you to use your imagination to create a unique and exciting environment. This activity not only encourages relaxation but also encourages social connections through play.

Suitable for
all ages
Time: 60
minutes



REMINDER

Please get an adult's help or supervision when handling scissors.



You can also invent your own creatures or imagine nature to form in a unique way (maybe the trees are purple!) For example, some other mythological creatures in Comorian mythology include *nzi* (mermaids), giant fish and sea serpents.

What you will need

- One medium sized cardboard box
- Paint
- Paintbrush
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Small natural materials e.g. pinecones, pebbles, fallen petals, fallen leaves or twigs
- Toys (optional)




Method

1. Go outside (with a guardian) and hunt for small natural materials that you can use for your island. Take your time exploring these objects




2. Turn the cardboard box on its side and remove one of the large central flaps of the cardboard. Ensure that the second flap is lying against the floor. Save the cardboard piece that you have cut.





3. Paint your sky on the base of the box. You can use a pencil to first outline what you want in the sky. Is it daytime or nighttime? Are there any stars or clouds? Are there animals in the sky like birds or a mythical creature?

4. On the second flap, paint your land. Is it a sandy island or grassy? How much water is surrounding your island?

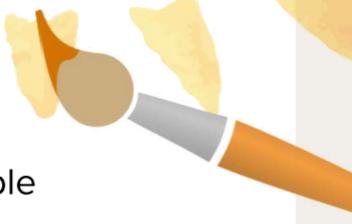


5. Next use the cut cardboard piece to create any key features of your island. Is there a volcano? Trees? Or maybe even a treasure chest? What mythological creatures live there?

6. Paint your natural materials to make them suitable for your island.

7. Once everything is dried you can start to add the pieces to the cardboard.

8. Add any natural materials that you have collected.



TIP

Glue your features in place or simply lean them against the backdrop so that you can adjust the position each time you play with the island

Bonus

1. Add any toys you would like to as your first island inhabitants!

2. Does your island have an interesting story?

3. Does your island have a name? Is there a story behind the name?

