



A Teaching Resource



- 01 Visiting: Active Learning Session - Myths and Legends
- 02 Curriculum Connections and Learning Outcomes
- 03 Resources
  - [Image Bank](#)
  - Luca Giordano: Bacchus and Ariadne
  - Story Scroll: Manasa the Snake Goddess
  - John Collier: Lady Godiva
  - Examples of Mythological Creatures

#### [Supporting Documents](#)

- Story: Theseus and Ariadne
  - Story: Lady Godiva
  - Story: Manasa the Snake Goddess
  - Fact Sheet: Mythology in Ancient Greece
  - Fact Sheet: The Minoan World
  - Fact Sheet: Anglo Saxon England
  - Fact Sheet: Bengali Culture
- 04 Useful links



Bacchus and Ariadne by Luca Giordano on display in the Old Masters Gallery at The Herbert Art Gallery and Museum



## INTRODUCTION

Session length: 2 hours

Session Description: KS2

For costs and booking information please see the [website](#).

Immerse yourselves in the world of storytelling. Explore the origins of stories and the truth behind the tales. Listen to and participate in a storytelling session and discuss and learn about techniques that bring a story to life. Your pupils will create their own stories inspired by the myth / legend you have chosen and learn how to become storytellers themselves. There will be a chance for a selection of pupils to perform their stories at the end of the session.

You can choose to focus on one of the following stories for your session:

- Theseus and the Minotaur
- Lady Godiva
- Manasa the Snake Goddess

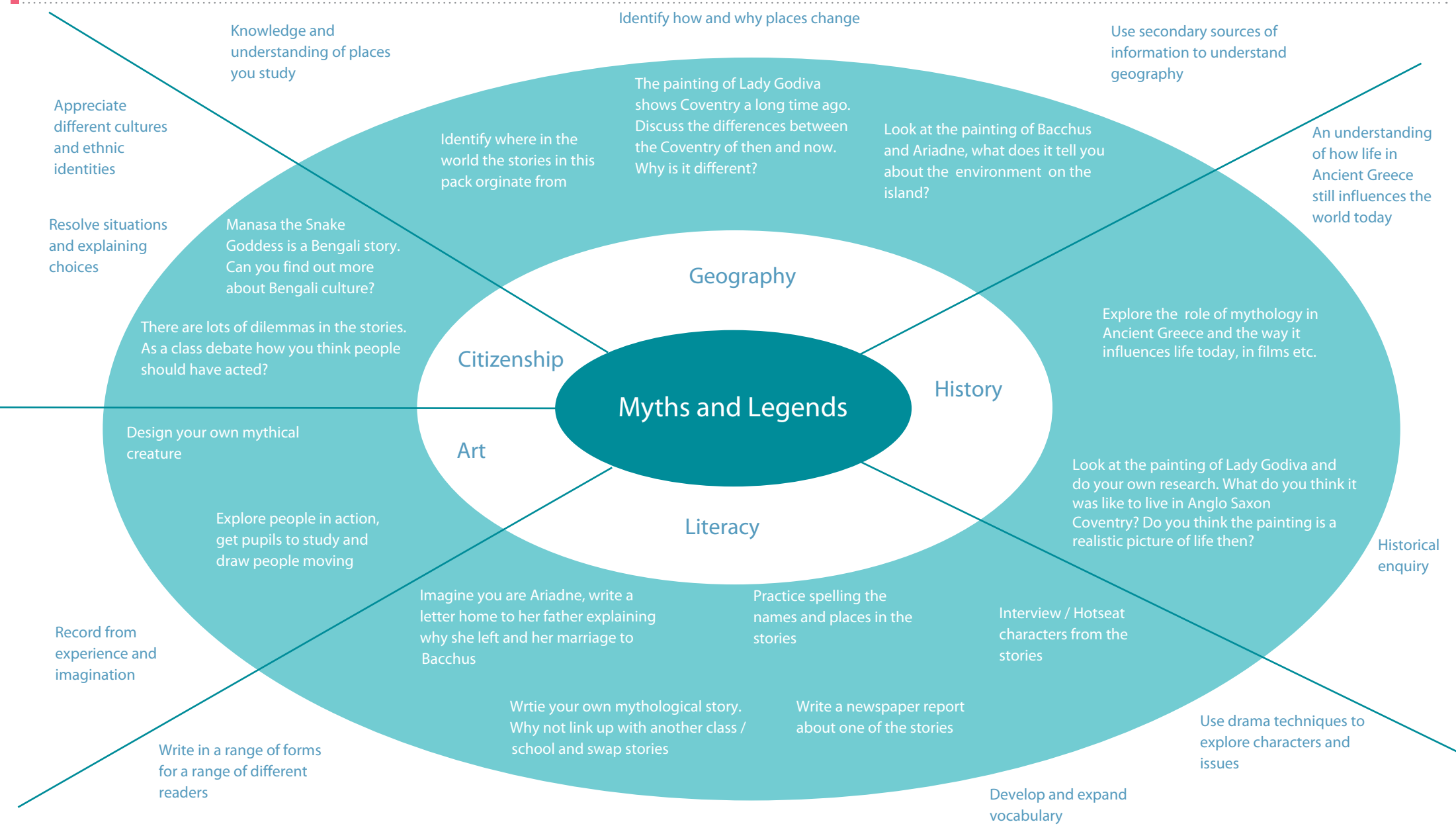
## Learning Outcomes

Through attending this session your children will build on the following skills:

- To speak with confidence and adapt speech to gain and maintain the interest of an audience
- Identify features of language used for a specific purpose
- Use character, action and narrative to convey a story
- Evaluate how they and others have contributed to the effectiveness of a performance
- To reflect on spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues, using imagination to understand other's experiences



Manasa the Snake Goddess Story Scroll in the Art since 1900 Gallery at The Herbert Art Gallery and Museum





### LUCA GIORDANO: BACCHUS AND ARIADNE

This enormous picture was painted in Florence between 1664 and 1665. It shows a scene from the ancient Greek myth of Bacchus and Ariadne. At this time it was fashionable to copy the art and architecture of the ancient Greeks and Romans. It is one of the finest paintings by Luca Giordano, who was an important Italian painter in the 1600s.

This painting can be seen on display in the Old Masters Gallery at The Herbert Art Gallery and Museum.



### MANASA THE SNAKE GODDESS

This is a Hindu story scroll telling the tale of Manasa the Snake goddess. Story scrolls are used as a visual aid to storytelling in Hindu tradition. In this image we can see one section of the scroll, which shows the dead hero of the tale, Lakhinder, being taken to visit a snake charmer in hope of bringing him back to life. For the whole story please see the Supporting Documents section.

This story scroll can be seen on display in the Art Since 1900 Gallery at The Herbert Art Gallery and Museum.





JOHN COLLIER: LADY GODIVA

This is probably the most famous painting of Lady Godiva. It has been chosen by some people as the unofficial image of both the city and Lady Godiva. It was painted by John Collier in 1898 and is quite an idealistic image of the legendary Lady Godiva riding through the streets of Coventry.

This painting, along with several others, can be seen on display in the Discover Godiva Gallery at The Herbert.





## THE MINOTAUR

The Minotaur was a mythical beast, he had the head of a bull and the body of a man. According to Greek mythology the god Posiedon had punished King Minos of Crete by making his wife fall in love with a bull, which resulted in her giving birth to the Minotaur. The Minotuar was so dangerous that he had to be kept imprisoned in a specially designed Labyrinth. Minotaur is a Greek word meaning 'Bull of Minos'.





## GRIFFIN

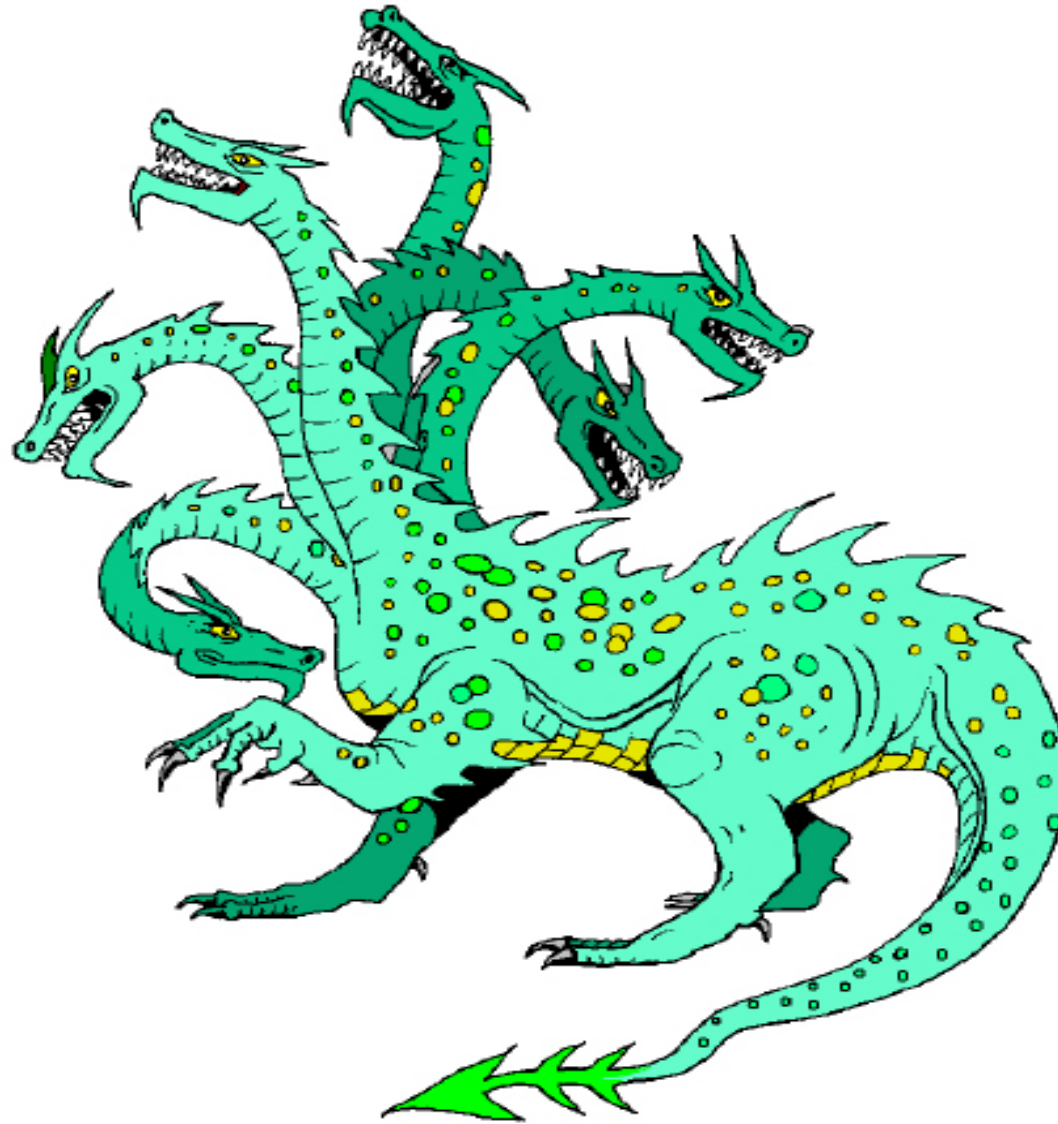
The Griffin has the body of a lion, but the head, wings and sometimes the claws of an eagle. With lions being seen as the the king of animals and eagles viewed as the most regal of birds, griffins are traditionally viewed as very noble and majestic creatures. In ancient times they were viewed as divine and were often shown guarding important objects and places.





## HYDRA

The Hydra was another ancient Greek mythological creature. It had the body of a dragon, but had seven heads. Its breath was poisonous and deadly. The Hydra lived in Lake Lerna in Greece and guarded the entrance to the Underworld. It was killed by Hercules.





## A WORLD OF STORIES

### Theseus, the Minotaur, Bacchus and Ariadne

King Minos, of Crete, was a powerful man and owned a magnificent palace. Inside this palace was a giant maze, known as a labyrinth and at the centre of this labyrinth was a terrifying beast called a Minotaur. The Minotaur had the head of a bull and the body of a man and humans were his favourite food.

Every year the King of Athens would send 7 men and 7 women to Crete to go into the Labyrinth for the Minotaur to eat. He did this to avoid King Minos declaring war on Athens. Theseus, the son of the King of Athens did not agree to this and vowed to go into the Labyrinth with the other men and women as one of the sacrifices so he could kill the beast.

Once in Crete, Theseus offered to go into the maze first, declaring his intentions to kill the Minotaur. Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos, fell in love with Theseus instantly and wanted to help him defeat the beast. She visited him secretly in the night and gave him a ball of string, telling him to tie one end to the entrance so he could find his way back if he killed the Minotaur. Theseus promised to take Ariadne back to Athens and marry her if he was successful.

Inside the labyrinth Theseus came face to face with the Minotaur and fought long and hard using all of his strength to defeat the beast. Eventually he heard the Minotaur's neck snap and fall to the floor with a thud. Theseus found the string that Ariadne had offered him and he followed the path of string back to the entrance where Ariadne was waiting for him. Theseus proclaimed to Ariadne that he would take her back to Athens with him, filling her with hopes of marriage and a lifetime of happiness. In truth, however, Theseus did not want to be with Ariadne and he abandoned her, alone, on an island called Naxos.

All was not lost for Ariadne though as she cried in despair watching Theseus' ship sail away, for she was discovered by Bacchus, the god of wine who was passing by with his followers. Bacchus fell in love with Ariadne at first sight. They were married soon after, with him giving her the sky as a wedding gift in which one day, he promised her, she would become a constellation.





## A WORLD OF STORIES

## Lady Godiva

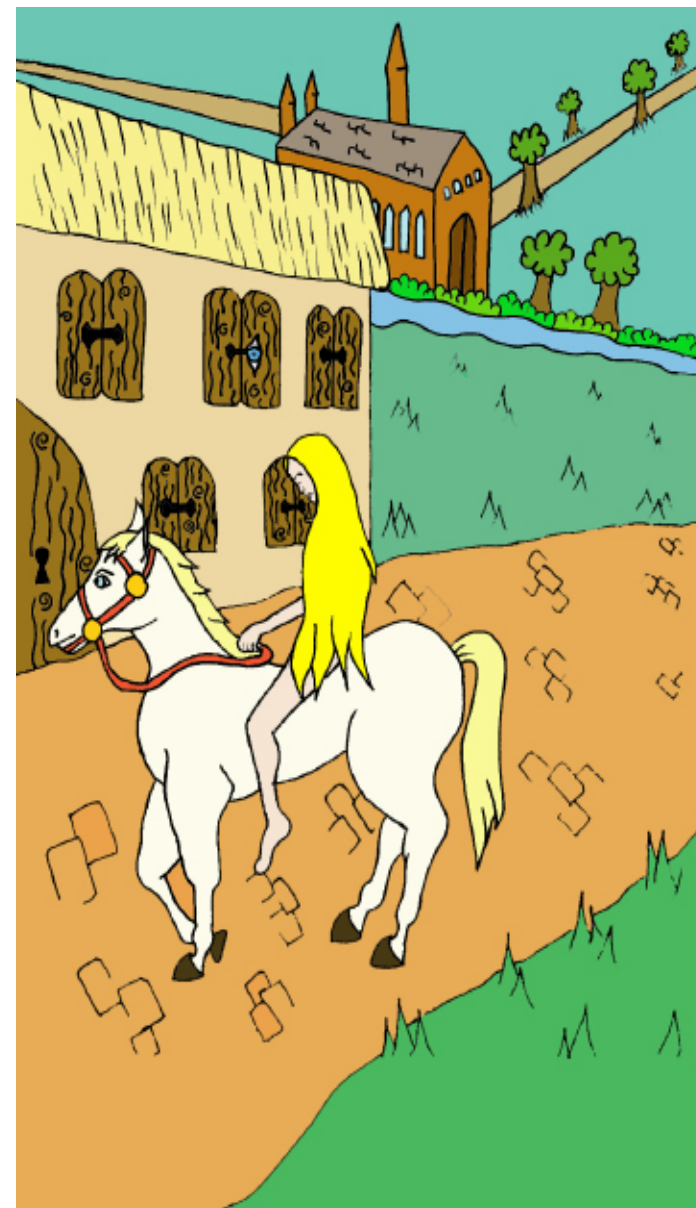
A long time ago, in Anglo-Saxon times, the people of Coventry were suffering greatly because Leofric, the Earl of Mercia, was forcing them to pay so much tax that they were struggling to survive.

Leofric's wife, Godiva, was so upset by the way he was treating his people that she begged him to lower the taxes. However, Leofric would not back down easily and rather than simply agreeing to his wife's protests, he challenged her. Leofric told Godiva that he would lower the taxes only if she were to ride through the town, from one side to the other, completely naked. For a noblewoman, such as Godiva, to ride through the streets naked would be humiliating, scary and shocking. However, Godiva, determined to help the people of Coventry, agreed to Leofric's demands.

Godiva issued a proclamation instructing everyone in the town to stay inside and close their shutters, so that nobody would see her riding naked. On the day of the ride, Godiva stripped herself of her clothing and rode through Coventry on her horse with only her long, golden hair covering her body.

All the people of Coventry shut their shutters and hid in their houses to show respect for Godiva. That is, all but one and this one was peeping Tom. Tom cut two holes in the wood of his shutters and kept watch through these holes to get a peep of the naked Godiva. But, unluckily for Tom, at the moment that Godiva rode past his window he was struck blind as a punishment for ignoring her request.

The taxes were reduced and Lady Godiva became a hero of Coventry and is still celebrated and known all over the world.





## A WORLD OF STORIES

### Manasa the Snake Goddess

Manasa was an ugly goddess who had no followers, so she decided to force a rich and powerful widower named Chand to worship her. However, Chand was a follower of Shiva, a Supreme God of Hinduism and such was his devotion that he refused to worship Manasa and he used the magical powers Shiva had bestowed upon him to ensure Manasa could not harm him.

Manasa was enraged and disguised herself as a beautiful temptress so she could trick Chand into marrying her. However, on their wedding night, the true Manasa revealed herself and Chand, repulsed by his new wife, again refused to worship her. Manasa was furious and killed Chand's six sons having them bitten by poisonous snakes.

Chand was cast away onto an island and went through many challenges in his attempts to return home. On his return, he remarried and his wife gave birth to a son, whom he named Lakhinder. Lakhinder was Chand's pride and joy and soon his father began to search for a bride for his son. Manasa heard of this and promised that on the night of the Lakhinder's wedding, they would be killed by a poisonous snakebite, so Chand had a special metal room designed for them to spend their first night in.

Manasa visited the room designer and demanded he leave a small hole in the room and because he feared for his life, he obeyed Manasa. When Lakhinder and his new wife fell asleep that night, in the metal room, hundreds of snakes found their way through the hole in the wall and killed Lakhinder.

Soon after, Lakhinder's body was set afloat on the river, as it was believed a snake bite did not fully kill a person and that a snake charmer could bring the person back to life. Lakhinder's wife followed the body and watched on as an old woman dragged him from the river and sprinkled water over his face. When he awoke the old woman revealed herself to be Manasa. Lakhinder and his wife were so grateful that they agreed to worship Manasa eternally and to convert Chand also. Manasa became famed for her skill with snakebites and is still worshipped today as a fearful and important goddess.





## FACT SHEET: GREEK MYTHOLOGY

- A myth is a particular type of story that often includes magical beasts, heroes and gods.
- Myths are not really based on historical fact and were often told as a way of explaining things that people did not easily understand, such as the changing of the seasons.
- Originally these myths were told by storytellers. It was only hundreds of years later that people started to write them down in books.
- In ancient Greece myths played an important part in everyday life. They were often stories about gods and goddesses that the Greeks worshipped and so were closely linked to their religion.
- The Greeks used scenes from mythology to decorate everything from pottery to their most important public buildings.
- We still enjoy many of these stories today. Your class might have seen films about the Trojan War, the hero Hercules or Jason and the Argonauts and their search for the golden fleece.





## FACT SHEET: THE MINOAN WORLD

- Between 2700 - 1450BC, the time when Pharaohs were building their great civilisation in Egypt, a new civilisation was emerging on the island of Crete.
- These people were highly sophisticated, they built large stone towns and huge palaces, they traded with people as far away as ancient Iraq and decorated their buildings with beautiful wall paintings. They even had toilets with proper drainage systems, the first that have been found anywhere in the world!
- The Minoan civilisation was discovered at the end of the 1800s by Sir Arthur Evans, a British archaeologist. His excavations at Knossos revealed a huge palace. The labyrinth layout of the building reminded Evans of the mythical Minotaur that was said to have lived on Crete. Evans called the new civilisation he had discovered the Minoans because of this.
- They worshipped a variety of gods and goddesses, with the most popular seeming to be the Snake Goddess, a woman often shown wearing a long skirt and waving snakes above her head. We don't know what she was the Goddess of.
- Women in general seem to have played an important part in Minoan religion, wall paintings reveal them to be leading religious ceremonies.
- Around 1450BC the Minoan civilisation began to fall apart. Nobody is quite sure what caused this, but there are lots of arguments that the massive volcanic eruption on Santorini had a devastating effect on the agriculture of Crete. The rise of the Mycenaean civilisation on mainland Greece possibly contributed to the downfall of the Minoans too. There is certainly evidence that it was the Mycenaeans that ruled Crete shortly after 1450BC.



Bull Leaping Fresco at Knossos, Crete Copyright of Rita Willaert



Ruins at Phaistos, Crete Copyright of Margaretha Hopfner



## FACT SHEET: LIFE FOR THE ANGLO SAXONS

- Lady Godiva was alive during the Anglo Saxon era, which lasted from around 400AD to 1066AD when the Battle of Hastings saw the beginning of the Norman reign.
- The early Anglo Saxons lived in small settlements that sometimes only consisted of two or three families and a few buildings. As time moved on and life progressed, these settlements became villages and towns with higher populations, although the population of towns during the Anglo Saxon period was incredibly low compared to today.
- The population of Coventry during Lady Godiva's ride was around 300 with only 69 families living in the town! The current population of Coventry is around 300,000.
- Houses in the Anglo Saxon period were made of wood with thatched roofs. The houses often only had one room that contained a hearth which would provide the space for cooking, heating and light at night. The hearths were lined with clay to stop the fire spreading throughout the house. Furniture in the houses was minimal. The furniture that was available was made out of wood, with woolen blankets weaved for warmth. Some homes did not have beds and so families would sleep on the floor using straw for comfort.
- Anglo Saxon women did all of the weaving to make clothes, blankets, wall hangings and rugs for their homes and their families. The men would go out to work all day farming to produce vegetables and meat. Men would also spend their days making tools, furniture, weapons, cooking and eating utensils, building houses and other buildings.
- Rivers, lakes and brooks were important factors in building a successful village or town as they were the sources of water for cooking, washing and drinking as well as fish to eat. This was a huge factor in why Coventry was such a successful town during Anglo Saxon times as the River Sherbourne ran through the town and was much larger during the Anglo Saxon period than it is today.





## FACT SHEET: BENGALI CULTURE

- Bengali culture is dominant in Bangladesh and the Indian state of West Bengal
- The predominant religion in the area is Hindu, but there is also a large Muslim population.
- It has a rich literary heritage with stories often focussing on the adventures of various gods and goddesses. As demonstrated by the story scrolls in our collection, storytellers often travel around villages telling tales and illustrating them
- The staple foods of Bengali culture are fish and rice. So much so that they have a popular saying "fish and rice make a Bengali"
- As in many areas of South Asia women wear the traditional sari and men wear the 'panjabi' a traditional three quarter length smock
- Sport is important, with Cricket and Football both being popular. However, the national sport of Bangladesh is Kabaddi, a team sport where opposing teams line up against opposite walls of a room and take it in turns to run across into the other team's territory and 'tag' as many of the opposing team's members as possible. They must do this in just one breath chanting 'kabaddi-kabaddi-kabaddi' whilst doing this. The team who 'tags' the most players scores the most points and wins.





If you are interested in finding out more detailed information about the areas covered in this pack then take a look at these websites.

Ancient Greece: [www.ancientgreece.co.uk](http://www.ancientgreece.co.uk)

Lady Godiva: [www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/anglo\\_saxons/godiva\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/anglo_saxons/godiva_01.shtml)

Anglo Saxons: [www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/anglo\\_saxons/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/anglo_saxons/)

Manasa the Snake Goddess: [www.pantheon.org/articles/m/manasa.html](http://www.pantheon.org/articles/m/manasa.html)



John Clifton: Lady Godiva and Earl Leofric

On display in Discover Godiva Gallery at The Herbert