

# Myths, In Verse

Julie Larios's "Phoenix" is a description of an ancient myth, rewritten as a poem. In this activity, you will read a paragraph about the myth of the phoenix. Based on what you learn, you will answer critical thinking questions to help you understand Julie's poem on a deeper level.

**Directions:** Read the paragraph below about the myth of the phoenix. Then use the information to answer the critical thinking questions.

The phoenix is a mythical sacred firebird found in myths from ancient Egypt, Greece, China, and other cultures. It is a bird with beautiful gold and red (sometimes purple and blue) feathers and a melodious singing voice. At the end of its life cycle, the phoenix builds itself a nest and sets it on fire. Both nest and bird burn, and a new phoenix arises out of the ashes. Only one phoenix exists at a time. The new bird is destined to live as long as the old one, anywhere from 500 to 1,461 years. In many cultures, the phoenix was a symbol for rebirth, and hope.

**1. What does the phoenix look and sound like when it's alive? What do these details tell you about the bird?**

---

---

---

**2. What does the phoenix do when it dies? What type of image does this create in your mind?**

---

---

---

**3. Why do you think ancient cultures saw the phoenix as a symbol for rebirth and hope? Is it a simile? A metaphor?**

---

---

---

Continued ►

## Myths, In Verse page 2

**Directions:** Now reread Julie Larios’s gorgeous poem “Phoenix” and answer the critical thinking questions below, incorporating what you learned about the ancient myth.

Rising  
from the ashes of her nest,  
away she flies.  
She is a bird that never dies.  
Singer  
and shape-changer,  
she is a strange one:  
Now a crane, now a drake,  
now a turtle, now a snake,  
now a swallow,  
now a swan—  
she burns and is reborn.  
And then she’s gone.

**4. What images does the poet use to symbolize rebirth? Why do you think she chooses these particular images?**

---

---

---

**5. In your opinion, does she succeed in transforming the ancient myth into a meaningful poem? Why or why not?**

---

---

---

**6. Can you think of a time in your life when you’ve felt like a phoenix?**

---

---

---