MYTHOLOGICAL CREATURES

Cultures across the world have invented legendary beasts. Today we received a letter from a mythological creature represented in one of the paintings here at the Ringling Museum of Art. We were able to guess which creature it was by the clues in our letter.

These are just a few of the mythological creatures represented in The Ringling Collection. Next time you’re exploring the galleries, see what more you can find!

Lots of mythical creatures are hybrids – they have traits of more than one kind of animal. A Satyr, for example, is part-human, part-goat, with furry legs, a tail, pointy ears, and horns.

So we played a game in which a team of players invented some kooky hybrid animals of our own. Without seeing other players’ contributions, one player would create the creature’s head, another would create the torso, and a third would create the legs. You can play this at home, and create a book of your many different hybrid creatures: cut each page into thirds, and mix and match body parts by flipping the pages! Another variation on this that you can try is using cut-out images from magazines instead of drawings.

This kind of game is called Exquisite Corpses, and was invented by a group of artists in the 1920s called the Surrealists.
Here’s a Fun Mythological Creature Project to try at Home…

Build a Gnome Home! Spend some time outside – in your yard, a public park, or here on the Ringling grounds! Find a little nook in which you can build a cozy residence for a gnome or fairy.

Collect natural materials you find on the ground to use. Remember to be respectful of nature when you’re collecting. Will the house need a roof made out of twigs? Or a tiny pebble path? What about a piece of bark for a door that can open and close? Decorate with flower petals and feathers.

These are some of our favorite children’s books featuring one or several mythological creatures!

- **The Little Mermaid**, Hans Christian Andersen
- **Julia’s House for Lost Creatures**, Ben Hatke
- **The Children’s Book of Mythical Beasts and Magical Monsters**, DK Publishing
- **My Father’s Dragon**, Ruth Stiles Gannett

Be a Research Detective!

Investigate some mythological creatures you didn’t know about before! See if you can find creatures…

- with special powers.
- that are in more than one culture’s folklore. (For example, both Chinese and European legends have dragons – what are some differences and similarities?)
- with elaborate origin stories. How did these creatures become the way they are?
- that are mash-ups of real animals.

You can do this at home on the internet, or at your local library. Here at The Ringling, we also have a great Art Library full of useful resources! Check it out!

Do you have questions or comments about this or other Family Programs at The Ringling?

E-mail Leigh Dale, Youth and Families Program Coordinator at [leigh.dale@ringling.org](mailto:leigh.dale@ringling.org)