

 This text is adapted from *The Legend of the Fens* on E2BN's *Myths and Legends* website (www.myths.e2bn.org/mythsandlegends).

The Legend of the Fens

The Fens, a large area of flat, low-lying land in eastern England, stretch from Lincoln in the north to Cambridge in the south. Nowadays only a complicated drainage system prevents the Fens from becoming water logged. However, legend has it that the Fens were once much drier.

Almost two thousand years ago, Britain was ruled by the Romans, but the Fens were still ruled by the Celtic chief, Mandru. The Romans wanted to take advantage of the Fens' resources: large areas of woodland, a fertile soil and lakes brimming with fish. The Fens were worth the time and effort it would take to claim them, or so the Romans thought.

The Roman Emperor Valerian ordered that Mandru's daughter, Rowena, be captured and forced into slavery. On hearing of his daughter's capture, Mandru gathered his warriors together. They made plans to overthrow the Romans, but before they could carry them out, the Romans captured them.

The captured Celts were put to death - all except Mandru, who managed to escape. He went into hiding and carefully laid his plans. Unlike the Romans, he knew how to engage with the local gods of water and the sky.

Several months later, a stranger came to town warning all the Celts to leave before nightfall. That night, those who had stayed were awoken by a great gale; they saw the town gates had been opened, so they took a chance and made their escape.

They met up with more Celts who had escaped from other settlements. Some were unsure of what to do next, but the stranger appeared again and revealed himself as Mandru. He told them the gods were very angry and that they must make haste to higher ground immediately.

The power of the storm increased and, at midday, the Romans thought they saw a cloud moving swiftly towards them. The cloud turned into a great wall of swirling water, which swept up everything in its path, including the Romans and their houses. Where there had been forest, the land appeared like a sea scattered with small islands.

Mandru led his countrymen back, in triumph, to these lands. The damp atmosphere often saw the Fens covered with a thick, long-lasting mist. The hardy and resourceful Celts stayed in these lands, using all their skill as fishermen and hunters to survive the hostile conditions.

Although the Romans drained parts of the Fens, large areas were left alone. After all, you never quite knew what was lurking in the misty vapour of the Fenland night!





This poem is by Don Paterson.

Why Do You Stay Up So Late?

(For Russ)

I'll tell you, if you really want to know:
remember that day you lost two years ago
at the rockpool where you sat and played the jeweller
with all those stones you'd stolen from the shore?
Most of them went dark and nothing more,
but sometimes one would blink the secret colour
it had locked up somewhere in its stony sleep.
This is how you knew the ones to keep.

So I collect the dull things of the day
in which I see some possibility
but which are dead and which have the surprise
I don't know, and I've no pool to help me tell—
so I look at them and look at them until
one thing makes a mirror in my eyes
then I paint it with the tear to make it bright.
This is why I sit up through the night.



Name:	Class:	Date:
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The Legend of the Fens

1 What are the Fens?

AF2
1 mark

2 Look at the second paragraph, beginning: *Almost two thousand years ago...*
Find and **copy a phrase** that hints that not everything will go to plan for the Romans.

AF2
1 mark

3 Look at the fourth paragraph, beginning: *The captured Celts...*
What do you find out about Mandru? Write **two** things.

1 _____

2 _____

AF2
1 mark

4 Why did Mandru go into hiding?

AF3
1 mark

5 *The hardy and resourceful Celts stayed in these lands, using all their skill as fishermen and hunters to survive the hostile conditions.*

What does the phrase *the hardy and resourceful Celts* show about the writer's attitude towards the Celts? Tick **one**.

The writer doesn't understand why the Celts went back to the Fens.

The writer thinks the Celts were uncivilised.

The writer thinks the Celts were strange.

The writer admires the Celts.

AF6
1 mark

/ 5
Total for this page

6 **Number** these events to show **the order** in which they happen in the story.

The first one has been done for you.

- A stranger came to town with a warning.
- 1 The Romans captured Mandru's daughter, Rowena.
- The Romans captured Mandru and his warriors.
- Mandru made plans to overthrow the Romans.
- A huge storm flooded the Fens.

AF4
1 mark

7 Draw lines to match each phrase with what it tells you about the Fens.

Phrase	The Fens are/were...
fertile soil	prone to flooding
misty vapour	not an easy place to live
complicated drainage system	damp
hostile conditions	a good place to grow crops

AF5
1 mark

8 Which of the following descriptions best fits this passage? Tick **one**.

- an historical account
- a traditional story partly based on real events
- a fairy tale
- a fable

AF7
1 mark

9 Mandru was brave.
Explain whether you think this is **true** or **not true**, using the story to support your answer.

AF3
2 marks

/ 10
Total for this test

Name:	Class:	Date:
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Why Do You Stay Up So Late?

1 The poet wrote this poem to explain to Russ why he stays up so late. Who do you think Russ might be? Tick the **best** answer.

- | | | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| the poet's dog | <input type="checkbox"/> | the poet's uncle | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| the poet's son | <input type="checkbox"/> | the poet's friend | <input type="checkbox"/> |

AF3
1 mark

2 Look at these lines from the poem.

*remember that day you lost two years ago
at the rockpool where you sat and played the jeweller
with all those stones you'd stolen from the shore?*

What does *that day you lost* tell you here? Tick **one**.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Russ was so caught up in what he was doing that the whole day had gone before he realised it. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Russ can't remember that day. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Russ got lost that day. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Russ wasted time that day. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

AF2
1 mark

3 Which of these words does the poet use to describe the things **he** collects? Tick **two**.

- | | | | | | |
|------|--------------------------|--------|--------------------------|------|--------------------------|
| dark | <input type="checkbox"/> | stony | <input type="checkbox"/> | dead | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| dull | <input type="checkbox"/> | stolen | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

AF2
1 mark

4 Write **one** word from the poem in each space below to complete the pairs of rhyming words. Two have been done for you.

know	ago
shore	
sleep	
surprise	eyes
	night

AF4
1 mark

/ 4
Total for this page

- 5 Which of the following is the poet's **main** purpose for writing this poem?
Tick **one**.
- to remember a family holiday
 - to explain why he writes poetry
 - to explain why he collects things
 - to make the reader laugh

AF6
1 mark

- 6 The poet collects *the dull things of the day*. What do you think he means by this? Explain as fully as you can.

AF3
2 marks

- 7 Look at these lines from the poem.
*one thing makes a mirror in my eyes
then I paint it with the tear to make it bright.*
Why does the poet use the words *mirror* and *bright*?

AF5
1 mark

- 8 According to the poet, why does he stay up so late? Explain your answer as fully as you can, using **your own words**.

AF3
2 marks

/ 10
Total for this test