

In the *Isadora Moon* stories, Isadora's mum is a fairy and her dad is a vampire. This means that, even though Isadora lives in the human world, she has adventures with lots of fantastical creatures.

Harriet Muncaster writes and draws the *Isadora Moon* books. Writers like Harriet often look at stories and legends from the past to get ideas for their own stories. What are some of the legends that Harriet looked at when telling the story of *Isadora Moon*, and what has she changed to make her stories as unique as Isadora herself?

Fairies



In the modern day, we picture fairies as tiny human-like creatures with wings like those of dragonflies or butterflies. However, up until the Victorian age (1837-1901), the word 'fairy' meant any magical creature or events and comes from the Old French word *faerie*, which means 'enchanted'. Goblins, pixies, dwarves and nymphs were all called 'fairies'. These different types of fairies usually did not have wings, and were sometimes human-sized instead of tiny. They could also be good or bad, either helping or tricking people.

Luckily, Isadora's mum, Countess Cordelia Moon, is a good fairy, who likes baking magical cakes, planting colourful flowers, and spending time in nature. Like most modern fairies, she has wings, magical powers, and a close connection with nature, but unlike fairies in some stories, she is human-size. Isadora's mum can fly using

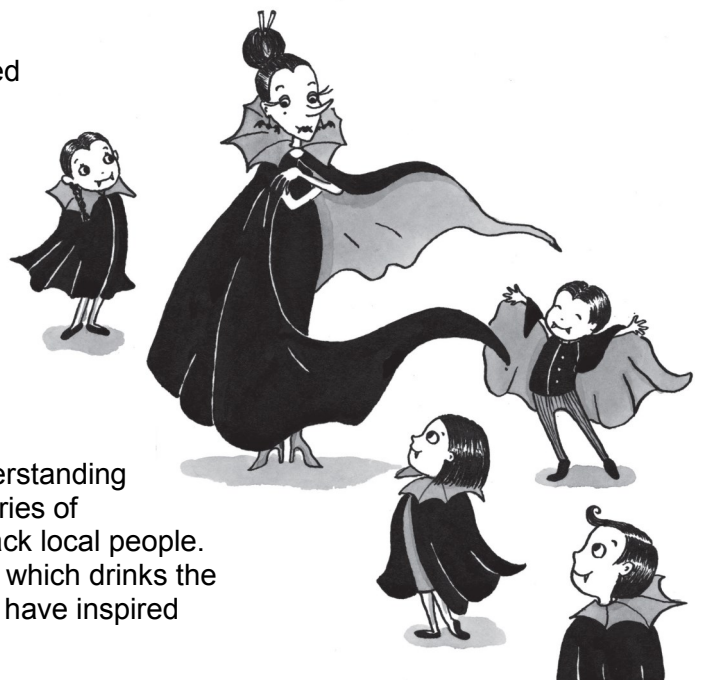
her fairy wings and can use her magic wand to bring toys to life, make plants grow anywhere, and change the appearance of different objects, such as Isadora's tent.

Famous fairies include the Fairy Godmother from *Cinderella*, who can grant wishes; the fairies from *Sleeping Beauty* who look after the young princess; and, perhaps the most famous of all, Tinker Bell from the story of *Peter Pan*, who is so famous she even has her own films and television series.

Vampires

Stories of vampires and similar creatures have existed for at least 6,000 years. These creatures were believed to come back from the dead to attack the living. In most legends, vampires drink the blood of their victims. Yuck! Fortunately, Isadora's dad, Count Bartholomew Moon, just eats red food, like tomatoes and beetroots.

No one knows exactly where stories of vampires come from, but there are lots of ideas. Some experts believe that vampire stories were a way to explain diseases that doctors in the past did not understand. Other experts believe that a lack of understanding about how bodies can change after death lead to stories of corpses miraculously escaping from the grave to attack local people. There is also a real type of bat, called a vampire bat, which drinks the blood of goats, pigs and other animals. This bat may have inspired vampire legends.





Like other vampires, Isadora's dad has fangs and can fly, but other characteristics vampires sometimes have include:

- ★ Being able to turn into mist, bats, cats or other animals.
- ★ Being able to talk with and control animals.
- ★ Weakness to sunlight, garlic, running water, and religious symbols.
- ★ No reflection in mirrors and sometimes no shadow.
- ★ Immortality, or 'living forever'.

Vampires can be scary, but Isadora's dad isn't scary: he likes grooming himself in front of the mirror, sleeping during the day, and gazing at



Mermaids

Mermaids are legendary creatures with the top half of a woman, and the bottom half of a fish. Male mermaids are called 'mermen'. Perhaps the most famous mermaid comes from the fairy story *The Little Mermaid* by the writer Hans Christian Anderson. This story about a mermaid falling in love with a human prince was made into a film by Disney. However, the first story of a half-human, half-fish may be as much as 6,500 years old! The ancient Babylonians worshipped a god called Ea, who had the tail of a



fish and the body and head of a man. Similarly, the ancient Syrians had a story about a goddess who transformed herself into a mermaid so she could live in a lake.

In some older stories, mermaids were believed to be harmful to sailors, often causing storms to damage their boats, or leading ships into dangerous rocks. More recent stories show mermaids to be kind, curious, and helpful. Sometimes mermaids have magical powers, such as curing illness, granting wishes, or even being able to live forever!

Isadora's mermaid friend, Marina, is definitely a friendly and kind mermaid. She uses her magical powers to create a bubble that lets Isadora Moon and Pink Rabbit breathe underwater, without even getting wet! She shows Isadora the mermaid kingdom, and even takes her to meet the mermaid princess.

Dragons

Did you know that there are two main types of dragon, the European dragon and the Chinese dragon? European dragons generally look like big, green, scaly lizards, which have wings and can sometimes breathe fire. Chinese dragons can be brightly-coloured, and have long, snake-like bodies and long whiskers. They can fly, but they usually don't have wings. Chinese dragons are magical beings, which can often bring good luck or even grant wishes, as well as having power over an element such as fire, water, or electricity.

In England, perhaps the most famous dragon is the one killed by Saint George. In the legend of Saint George and the Dragon, a town was being terrorised by a dragon. To stop the dragon from destroying





their crops, the people of the town fed the dragon two sheep every day. When there were no more sheep, the dragon wanted to eat their children; otherwise, it would go back to destroying their crops. Saint George was a travelling knight who came across this town. When he saw the trouble the people were in, he agreed to kill the dragon. He rode out to the lake where the dragon lived and fought with it until he eventually managed to stab it and kill it with his sword. We still celebrate Saint George killing the dragon in England every year on St. George's Day.

The dragon Isadora Moon meets doesn't eat children, destroy crops, or breathe fire, which makes it much safer for Isadora to take to school. Instead of children, it eats everything in Isadora's fridge, and instead of fire it breathes clouds of glitter, which isn't dangerous, but is very messy!

What would happen if you met one of these creatures?

Isadora is half-vampire and half-fairy herself, so she meets magical creatures all the time. But what would happen if you met one of these creatures?

Can you imagine a spooky run-in with a vampire, or a magical experience with a fairy?

How about swimming with mermaids, or finding a real-life dragon egg that's ready to hatch?

What would happen? Who would you tell about it? Would it be a fun or scary or exciting experience?

Try writing your own story about meeting a magical creature. You might like to start by thinking about:

- ★ What sort of creature would you meet?
- ★ What powers or strange characteristics would it have?
- ★ Will it be big, small or human-sized? Will it be scary or friendly?
- ★ How is your creature similar to and different than what people expect? For example, is your vampire friendly rather than scary (like Isadora's dad)?
- ★ Will you keep it secret, or tell everyone?
- ★ What sort of problems might you run into? Will the creature cause the problems, or will it be able to help with problems caused by something else?
- ★ How will you overcome those problems?

Remember it's not cheating to look at stories and creatures that already exist, as long as you put your own spin on them!

