

## Key Stage 3-5

# MESSAGES THROUGH TIME

**Message:** the inspired utterance of a prophet or sage.

**This resource will appeal to anybody who loves science fiction/fantasy or magic such as The Lord of the Rings or Harry Potter.**

 Llenyddiaeth  
Cymru  
Literature  
Wales

An activity by Sophie McKeand,  
Young People's Laureate for  
Wales, for Literature Wales,  
the National Company for the  
development of literature in  
Wales.

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## Kat Godeu/The Battle of the Trees (Excerpt)

I was in a multitude of forms  
Before I was unfettered  
I was a slender mottled sword  
Made from the hand.  
I was a droplet in the air,  
I was the stellar radiance of the stars.  
I was a word in writing,  
I was a book in my prime.  
I was the light of a lantern  
for a year and a half.  
I was a bridge standing  
over sixty estuaries.  
I was a path, I was an eagle,  
I was a coracle on the seas.  
I was effervescence in drink,  
I was a raindrop in a shower.  
I was a sword in the hand,  
I was a shield in battle.  
I was a string in a harp  
under enchantment for nine years,  
[and] foam in water.  
I was a tinder-spark in a fire,  
I was a tree in a conflagration.  
I am not one who does not sing,  
I have sung from infancy.

by *Taliesin*  
translated by *Marged Haycock*

The Welsh bard Taliesin was both a prophet and sage. Numerous myths and legends surround his birth and life as his inspired poetry existed in spoken form for hundreds of years before being committed to the page.

One of Taliesin's most famous poems is *Kat Godeu* or *The Battle of the Trees*. The excerpt on the previous page is taken from Marged Haycock's *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin*, and has been translated into English by Haycock from medieval Welsh.

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**What message is the poet sending out to us across time about who he is?**

The opening line reminds us of Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself* - 'I am large, I contain multitudes...'

In this poem Taliesin transforms from a single word to the whole book.

**What does it mean?**

**If you were to think of yourself in this transformative, mythical form what would you be?**

**What message would you want to send to others about your mythical self?**

**Remember - in the space of this poem you can be any shape or form or element.**

**Here's an excerpt from a poem of mine inspired by *Kat Godeu*:**

I  
I am in  
I am out  
I am up  
I am down  
I am left  
I am right  
I talk with trees  
I have seen the hearts of mountains  
(the starry night sky)  
and the universe told me her name.

**Now it's your turn to write.**

**Try starting each line with either I was, I am or I will be.**

Explore the possibilities of shape-shifting as you time-travel through the poem from past, to present to future.

**Finally, practice speaking your poem out-loud as Taliesin would have done. Whisper it. Shriek it.**

**This is your inspired message to the world, your declaration of who you really are.**