

Los Duendes

Paso 1: Read the story to learn about the legend of *Los Duendes* as told many Latin American countries.

Los Duendes are the elves of Latin American mythology. They are small, measuring only about 20 inches tall. They typically have long hair and run around without clothes. The males have long beards. In many versions of the legend, *Los Duendes* have no thumbs.

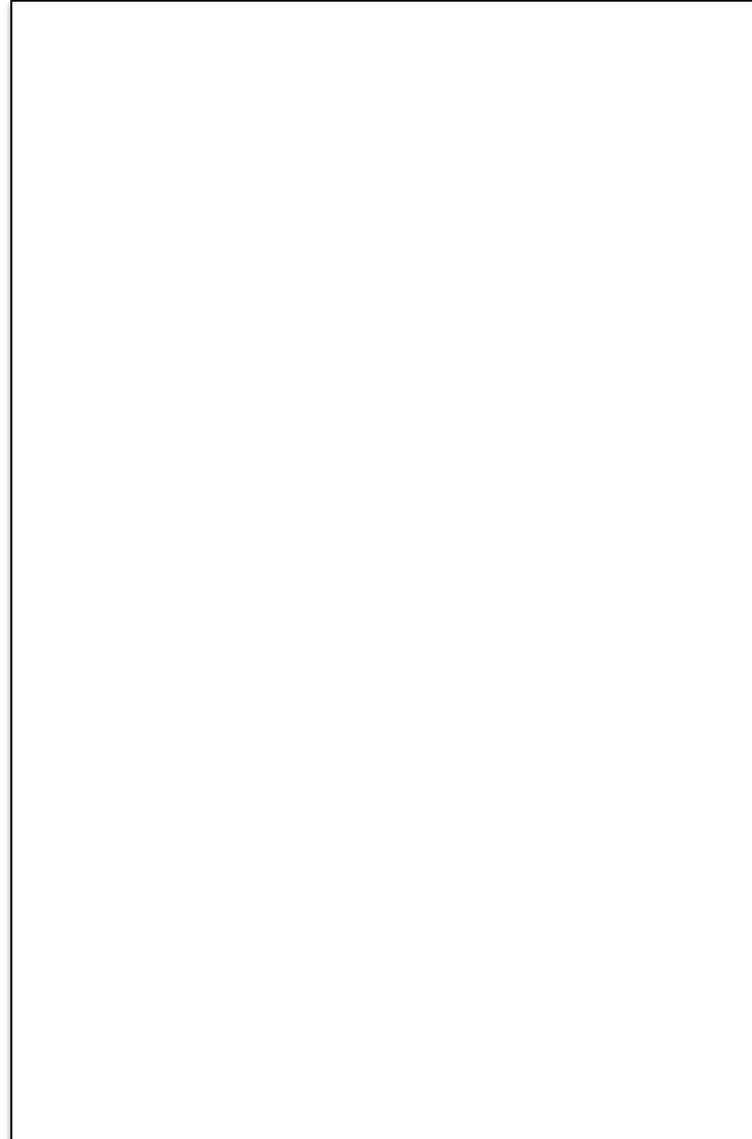
Los Duendes tend to live in large groups in the forest. Many legends say that they are in fact the protectors of the forest and will get upset if they find anyone killing or harming the animals that live there. Sometimes a *Duende* will get tired and fall asleep at the foot of a tree. If it does, it will turn itself into a red clay figure.

They are mischievous, playful creatures. They might hide your keys, steal your things, or spill your drink just for fun.

Most commonly, *Los Duendes* appear to children. They are said to try and lure them away from their parents and into the woods. Once they have the children, they will not harm them, but they may keep them in the forest, playing for days.

Some say that the number of *Duendes* in existence are dwindling. As deforestation continues in Latin America, they are forced to retreat further into the forest and away from people.

Paso 2: Draw a picture of *Los Duendes* based on what you read.



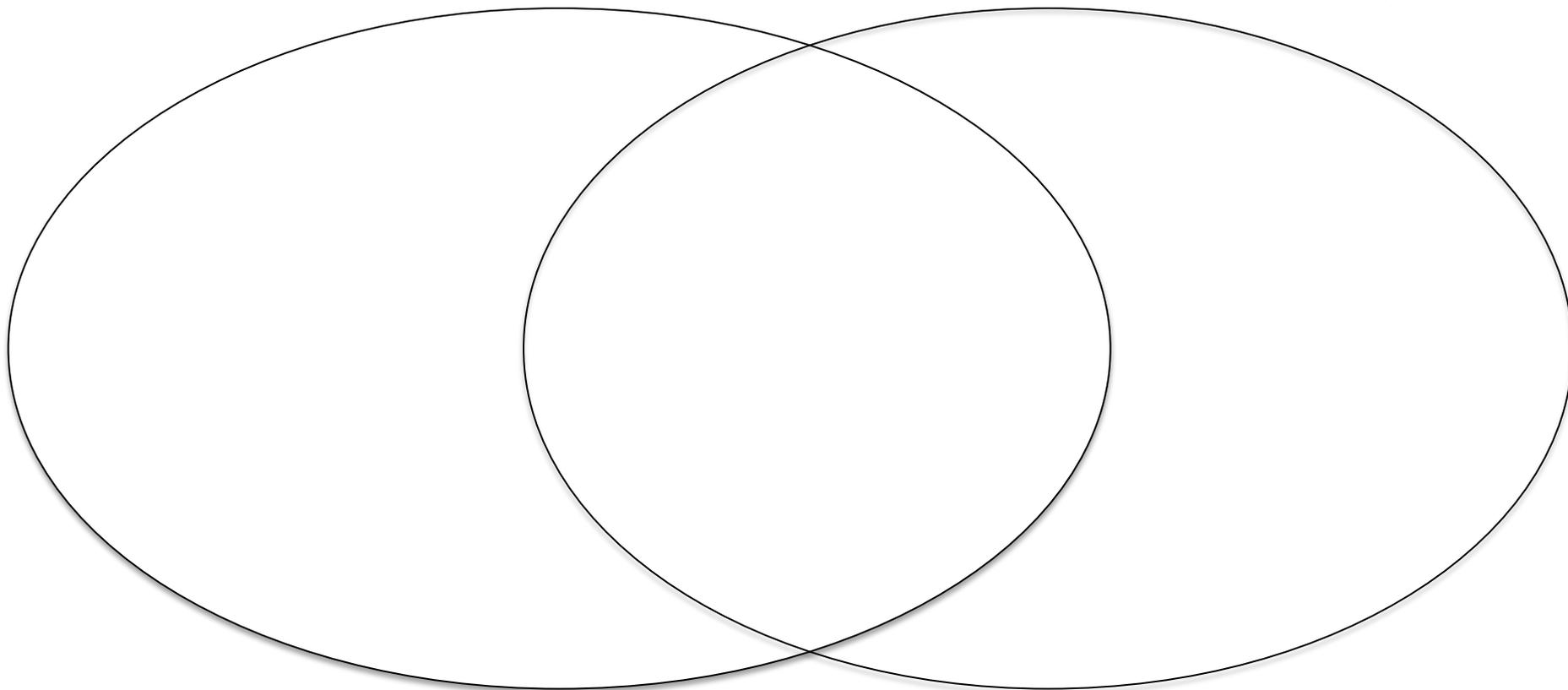
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Paso 3: Legends are constantly changing, much like a game of telephone. As the story is told again and again, it changes slightly each time until different countries and regions end up with different versions of the same legend. *Los Duendes*, for example, have some similarities to the Irish legend of the leprechaun.

Use the Venn Diagram below to compare and contrast what you now know about *Los Duendes* to what you know about the legend of the leprechaun.

Los Duendes

Leprechauns



Los Duendes

Paso 4: *Los Duendes* are known by some as protectors of the forest. As a result, some believe that deforestation is impacting *los Duendes* just as it impacts other creatures of the forest.

Deforestation is of special concern in rainforests because they are home to such a large number of different animal and insect species. In the last 50 years, nearly 17% of the Amazon rainforest has been lost to deforestation.

The forests and rainforests are not just home to animals, insects and *Duendes*, they are also home to many indigenous groups like the Achuar people of Ecuador. These groups live in remote areas of the rainforest with very little contact with the outside world. How would their lives and traditions be affected if they were forced out of the forest in which they have lived? Share your ideas (both positive and negative) below.

Negative Impact

Positive Impact

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Paso 5: *Los Duendes* are not the only mythical beings that protect the land. Read the legend of *La Madremonte* below and then respond to the questions that follow in English.

La Madremonte, or “Mother Mountain” in English, is a large woman that is believed to live in the mountains, jungles, and stream areas of Colombia. Her body, including her face, is covered in leaves and moss. Her hair is a tangled mess of plants and leaves.

La Madremonte rules the winds, rains, and all of the vegetation. Her role is to protect nature from man. Those who wander into her territory will become lost and confused. Paths that were once there will disappear and mountains will change their shapes.

Paso 6: Answer the questions below in English based on what you know not only about *Los Duendes*, but also about *La Madremonte*.

1. What do legendary creatures like *La Madremonte* and *Los Duendes* say about the relationship between humans and nature? Give some examples.

2. Both the legends of *Los Duendes* and that of *La Madremonte* originated with indigenous cultures. What types of natural events might they have blamed on beings like this being displeased with the actions of men?
