

1. Your experiences of the word 'fate'

Have you heard of the word before?

- How might you define the word to somebody else?
- Write a sentence including the word 'fate'.
- Within that sentence, what type of word is 'fate'?
- Can you think of a text you've read where *fate* is a theme?

2. Fate: what does it mean?

noun The Oxford Dictionary defines fate as, "The development of events outside a person's control, regarded as predetermined by a supernatural power."

An example sentence would be, "The course of his journey was decided by fate."

3. Etymology (where the word comes from)

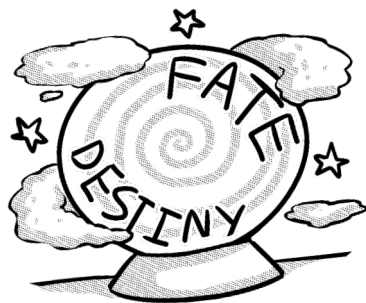
The word fate originates from the Latin *fatum*, which means, "that which has been spoken", originally from the Latin *fari*, meaning speak.

The first recorded use of 'fate' as a noun and as a verb appears to be during the fourteenth century (1300s) in Old French. Lots of the meanings included the idea of destiny, a predetermined course in life. It is also related to something that has been determined by God/s. Fate is often used in the bad sense in Latin: "bad luck, ill fortune, mishap or ruin".



KS3 Spine

Fate



4. Fate as an agency of power.

One interpretation of *fate* suggests that it is governed by a power above, or natural order of the universe, and is therefore outside of our control. Fate can be attributed to past, present and future events, and it can have either a positive or negative impact.

Fate plays a role in superstitions, e.g. the idea that breaking a mirror will have an impact on future "luck" for a set period of time.

The idiom written in the stars relates to fate as it suggests that something is "written in the stars" (pre-planned and set out before we even had a choice) by a higher being or universal power.



5. Free will

Free will is defined as, "the ability to decide what to do independently of any outside influence" (Cambridge Dictionary).

Whilst free will is not the opposite of fate, they can be seen as conflicting. Free will suggests that we have the ability to choose between different possible courses of action without the constraints of fate. Philosophically, if you believe in free will, you believe that human beings can be the authors of their own actions, rather than being influenced or led by something external or a higher universal power.

- Can someone believe in free will and in fate?
- How might the two ideas conflict with each other?
- Thinking about your own life, do you have complete free will?
- Does anyone have complete free will?



6. Synonyms

Complete the table below, listing as many synonyms for fate as you can. An example has been added to start you off.

Synonyms
preordained



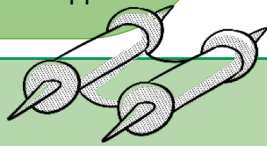
7. Fate and religion



Fate and religion are often seen as being closely linked. Religious leaders will often talk about “a calling” into religion or to their role, suggesting that there was an element of predestination. However, there are slight differences we need to be aware of.

Religion is the belief in a supernatural power which calls us to certain things and, depending on the religious belief, may also be the belief in a high power pre-planning our destiny. Fate itself refers to a force that predetermines events, an order in the Universe that we are powerless to change, no matter how much we wish to. However, in several religions, such as Christianity, the concept of prayer and a personal relationship with God leads away from the idea of fate, especially as God granted man free will.

Belief in destiny and fate is one of the basic beliefs of Islam. Muslims believe Allah is the Knower of all things and the Creator of all things; nothing exists outside of His will and decree. Everything in the universe, every creature and the things it does, is the creation of Allah. Whatever He wills happens, and whatever He does not will does not happen.



Key Vocabulary

Free Will: The power to act independently on your own without the restriction of fate.

Religion: The belief in and worship of a superhuman power often known as a God or gods.

Mythology: a collection of myths, stories or beliefs often belonging to a religion, culture or condition.

Superstition: A widely held but irrational belief in supernatural influence often leading to good or bad luck.

Context: The context of a text is the place and time in which it was written, who it was written by, and where it was published.

Genre: the type of text and how it is categorised e.g. thriller, romance, gothic...

8. Fate in Greek mythology

Many ancient Greeks believed you couldn't escape your fate.



In Greek and Roman mythology, the Fates (known as Moirae in Greek) were three goddesses who determined the destinies of humans. Their names were Atropos, Clotho, and Lachesis. Clotho spun the “thread” of human fate, Lachesis measured the thread of life and handed it out, and Atropos cut the thread (which decided the individual's moment of death). Even the gods were fearful of the Fates.

In Greek myths, we see many characters who try to change their fate. Despite their attempts, their efforts are useless. In most stories where a character tries to prevent a negative fate, we see that the attempts actually provide the circumstances needed for this fate to take place. For example, the King of Thebes learns that his son, Oedipus, will kill him. He therefore tries to have Oedipus killed, but only ensures that many years later, the two don't recognise each other. A dispute arises and Oedipus kills his father, without realising who he is. It could be said that this wasn't fate, but a result of Thebes actions.



9. Fate in Shakespeare

Fate appears in a number of Shakespeare's tragedies. Macbeth and Romeo and Juliet are good examples.

In Macbeth, Shakespeare includes a prophecy of the three witches (inspired by the Fates) which persuades Macbeth into evil in the first half of the play; then, in the second half, they reveal a prophecy regarding Macduff which seals Macbeth's defeat and death. However, this could be seen in an alternative way. Instead of being fate, just as with Thebes and Oedipus, it could be seen that the duel between Macbeth and Macduff is actually a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Similarly in Romeo and Juliet, despite being referred to as 'star cross'd lovers', it could be argued that they take enough steps themselves to suggest that fate is not present at all.

Perhaps fate does not exist at all, but it's human action. This idea was presented in the 20th century philosophical idea of existentialism. Despite random and meaningless events, humans have the power and freedom to act however they choose and should be accountable for that.

Activities

- Considering the information from this mat, summarise the concept of fate.
- What is the difference between fate and free will?
- What were the three Fates called in Greek mythology?
- Do you think fate is as relevant in today's society as it was in the past?
- Can you think of another text you have read where fate is a theme? What impact does fate have on characters, action or plot?
- Research the plot of Romeo and Juliet and decide how fate plays a part. List three ways fate plays a role in the story of Romeo and Juliet. Does fate play a positive or negative role in the play?