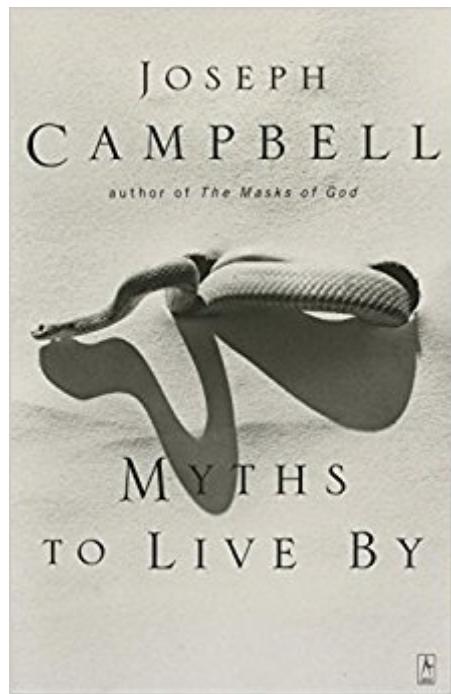


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Myths To Live By



Synopsis

"There is no one quite like Joseph Campbell. He knows the vast sweep of man's panoramic past as few men have ever known it." -The Village Voice

What is a properly functioning mythology and what are its functions? Can we use myths to help relieve our modern anxiety, or do they help foster it? In *Myths to Live by*, Joseph Campbell explores the enduring power of the universal myths that influence our lives daily and examines the myth-making process from the primitive past to the immediate present, retuning always to the source from which all mythology springs: the creative imagination. Campbell stresses that the borders dividing the Earth have been shattered; that myths and religions have always followed the certain basic archetypes and are no longer exclusive to a single people, region, or religion. He shows how we must recognize their common denominators and allow this knowledge to be of use in fulfilling human potential everywhere.

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Customer Reviews

Joseph Campbell was interested in mythology since his childhood in New York, when he read books about American Indians, frequently visited the American Museum of Natural History, and was fascinated by the museum's collection of totem poles. He earned his B.A. and M.A. degrees at Columbia in 1925 and 1927 and went on to study medieval French and Sanskrit at the universities of Paris and Munich. After a period in California, where he encountered John Steinbeck and the biologist Ed Ricketts, he taught at the Canterbury School, then, in 1934, joined the literature department at Sarah Lawrence College, a post he retained for many years. During the 1940s and

'50s, he helped Swami Nikhilananda to translate the Upanishads and The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. The many books by Professor Campbell include The Hero with a Thousand Faces, Myths to Live By, The Flight of the Wild Gander, and The Mythic Image. He edited The Portable Arabian Nights, The Portable Jung, and other works. He died in 1987.

...it is Joseph Campbell... one of the greatest philosophers of the past century... you can not help but grow and mature, when you read his words. a remarkable man and it is a gift he so willingly shared so much of his philosophy with the world.. we are better as a species to have had him with us.

Joseph Campbell is among the great spiritual thinkers of the 20th/21st centuries. His prolific writings draw their inspiration from the myths of the world. In "Campbellian" terms the world myths (imagination expressing ultimate truths via metaphor) tie all humanity together. Through Campbell's works I have come to appreciate the truth that humanity shares a common spirituality expressed in different religious traditions. He is brilliant in his vast appreciation of global cultures and how these cultures deal with what Campbell calls the "Great Secret;" otherwise called our collective concern with our mortality. Joseph Campbell is a teacher par excellence. Through him I have grown in my own religious tradition which, in itself, is rich with legend and myth recounted in its stories that deal with ultimate truth. Highly recommended along with Richard Rohr who is also a gifted teacher of spirituality.

One of those rare books where the ideas always remain fresh and original, and the insights are deeply personal and universal at the same time. Based on a series of lectures by Joseph Campbell, this book synthesizes not just his work but the insights he gained from his lifelong studies of the world's mythologies.

I was lucky enough to meet Joseph Campbell in the 1980s when he lectured at Salve Regina in Newport, Rhode Island. Campbell, America's premier mythologist, spoke for just under an hour and just that short amount of time, he had me hooked. In the years that followed, I read many of his works and found that his writings have gradually shaped my own thoughts and greatly influenced my own career as a history teacher. He has opened my eyes to many of our common experiences as human beings and now I find that when I look at people and their cultures, I see more commonalities and fewer differences. Meaning no disrespect to those immersed in diversity, I prefer

to see things that people have in common. Campbell did that. *Myths to Live By* is a great introduction to the works of a great writer. Read them, think about them, React to them. It's time well spent by anyone.

All Joseph Campbell's books are great. I highly recommend though going to his foundations site and getting tapes of his lectures. You can't get the full flavor and impact of his work until you hear him.

Opening a book by Joseph Campbell is like emerging from a cave and seeing the world for the first time. It is not a light read, but it is well worth the effort. Have you ever wondered why the tale of Cinderella or Sleeping Beauty resonates as deeply with your daughter as it did to children four centuries ago, or why Beowulf, The Iliad, and The Odessey, stories so old that they cannot be traced to their source, are reinterpreted generation after generation? Campbell's idea is simple. The stories that we love and that we tell are what define us. We must all, for example, come to terms with the fact that we kill plants and animals in order to live. We must all explain what lies beyond death, and why we have been given the gift of life. We need to know what is worth living for and what is worth dying for. This book is not for the devoutly religious. Campbell uses religion and myth as synonyms and gives equal credence to Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and plains Indian religious beliefs. The truth here was not written by an angry God on large stone tablets; it is found in the stories that we tell ourselves and our children. Campbell examines the way people around the world have dealt with these questions and what happens when the myths we live by are swept away and replaced by nothing. In many ways, this book is like a rich cheesecake. It cannot be consumed all at once. It needs to be savored a little at a time, and digested before moving on.

I love Joseph Campbell! He is the best story teller ever. He helps makes sense of so many of the beliefs we have today and where they came from. Indulge yourself in learning.

A perfectly clear treatise on rituals, cultural traditions, and religious practices that helps the reader understand it all. This should be required reading in every college level religion and philosophy class.

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