



Creative Mythology

Joseph Campbell

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) ➔

Creative Mythology

Joseph Campbell

Creative Mythology Joseph Campbell

This volume explores the whole inner story of modern culture since the Dark Ages, treating modern man's unique position as the creator of his own mythology.

Creative Mythology Details

Date : Published November 1st 1991 by Penguin Books (first published 1968)

ISBN : 9780140194401

Author : Joseph Campbell

Format : Paperback 752 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Mythology, Nonfiction, Religion, History, Philosophy, Psychology



[Download Creative Mythology ...pdf](#)



[Read Online Creative Mythology ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Creative Mythology Joseph Campbell

From Reader Review Creative Mythology for online ebook

David Melbie says

This is the book that contains Joe's 'Annotated Parzival,' as I call it, and a very sharp look at our modern tendency toward older myths.

Even as I write this, our nation toils on, waging war and ravaging the planet. But, I digress. . . --From *A Reader's Journal*, by d r melbie.

Gabriele says

After exploring ancient, Eastern, and Western mythology and religion up until the approximate time of the Dark Ages, Joseph Campbell's final volume of his Masks of God series deals with the "modern" world. As societies became increasingly mobile and fluid, the social purpose of religion and myth (transmission of local cultural "rules" to each generation, and the acceptance of those rules) fades in importance. Now what?

Creative Mythology explores what happens as cultures begin to intermingle, how local symbols are repurposed for new reasons in new places. He uses the lens of epic poetry to show us the heretic Christian ideas of Tristan & Isolde, the heavily pagan roots of Beowulf, and the Islamic influence on Dante's Divine Comedy (which was super interesting to me, since I took a class on just this work in college, and to the best of my recollection, this never came up). He moves into the modern world by dissecting some of the works of Thomas Mann and James Joyce (Finnegan's Wake, Ulysses, and Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man). Portrait was something I read several years ago that I enjoyed not at all and remembered precious little of, and after reading about it here, I'm not sure I want to read Ulysses even though it's a "classic" because it sounds very tiresome. Campbell wraps up his review by discussing the Holy Grail mythologies in the Knights of the Round Table/Arthurian legends (this section is very very long), and then concludes by reflecting back on the functions of mythologies, and how they have and do work (or not, as the case may be).

I'm not going to lie...I'm very glad to be done with this series. It was very informative, but only sporadically interesting. Do I feel much better versed in world religion and mythology? Yes. Would my life have been just as lovely without it? Absolutely.

Michael says

In graduate school, when I asked my beloved mentor, Freudian/Lacanian David Wagenknecht about Carl Jung, his response was, "I dunno: a little too Joseph Campbell for me." There is no better or smarter human on earth than David and so I didn't read either Jung (who I now worship) or Campbell (who I now really, really love) for many years. I think the wait was just fine for me (sorry Dave) but I know I will be reading at least Campbell's Masks of God for the rest of my life (and perhaps also his Skeleton's Key to Finnegan's Wake at least twice more). Campbell is NOT a mere popularizer of Jung (more like a popularizer of Thomas Mann if you had choose) and not the hokey Ur-mythologist I was expecting -- but a rigorous academic and scholar, an inspiring thinker, a terrific organizer, and a fabulous bibliographer. Admittedly, in my middle-age, I find something very comforting about these books (which in fact make no truth-claims whatsoever

regarding supernatural matrices) but am not entirely sure why. I love these four books.

Ned says

analysis wrapped in mysteries tied with contradictions made out of the tinder and spark of campfire stories, brick kilns, and steel foundries. Materials, colors, designs, executed, shared, found, sifted, chosen, revealed. Shelved.

Cypress Butane says

Just started re-reading this one. I got about halfway through last time and found so much good stuff in it last time that I thought I'd see what I pick up this time through.

It's interesting that it starts with the time of the 'dark ages' since what I'm working on now, though set in modern day, has a kind of allegory of the idea of the dark ages.

I really would like to learn more about Joseph Campbell. I know some basics of his ideas, but he has written a lot. I'll probably also be watching the 'Mythos' series he did, on Netflix.

Mackenzie says

All the Joseph Campbell books scratch a really deep itch to understand your favorite stories in the grand context of the history of humanity. I haven't ventured past *The Power of Myth*, but I'm especially excited to challenge my preconceptions with some of the non western myths he discusses.

Michael says

“For it is simply a fact that poets and artists, who are dealing every day of their lives with the feeling- as well as thought-values of their own imageries of communication, are endowed with a developed organ for the understanding of myth that is too often lacking in the merely learned; so that when the artist or poet is also learned, he may be a more dependable guide to the nuclear themes of a given mythic complex, and a much more profound interpreter of their relevance to life, than even the most respected of its specialized academic elucidators.”

It occurs that Campbell, no matter how ubiquitous or popular he is, is a tragically underestimated source of human understanding. It seems his work, to some degree, suffers for its author's visibility. As if scholars, each devoted to their field with accepted dogmatic myopia—whether their gaze is upon anthropology, psychology, theology, language, philosophy or literature—conjure up an image of an old man too congenial for genius, with the Gollum like presence of one Bill Moyers perpetually clung to his back, and can thus look past this man that ruthlessly cuts to the one and common quick, who pulls back the plural curtain dividing our learning to reveal how we draw our energy from the heart of the matter.

If Campbell suffers a somewhat polarized reception, the reason, I speculate, hinges on how he emphasizes eastern thought—a term I use here to mark a distinction between thought/theory and action/practice. The eastern philosophies are more advanced for nothing but their emphasis on pulling the philosopher out of his chair. And it is for this very same reason that the western mind will not admit this supremacy, and so too with Campbell, that there is a contingent that resists and objects to his thought.

But this reluctance, as Campbell will tell you, is fear. And only he who overcomes it becomes the hero of his own life and thus alive—which no mere thinker can ever be. As Nietzsche says, “whatever can be thought, cannot but be a fiction.” The mere thinker is a spectator, the crying critic.

Returning to Campbell after an inexcusable 10 year drought—or, as he might say, wasteland—I find myself singularly compelled to to this incredibly presumptuous declaration, that most of Campbell’s detractors are forming their opinions with a much inferior complement of understanding than he. I will go so far as to say that the wise reader, when coming upon something in Campbell that she finds disagreeable, will at least explore the possibility that she herself is wrong, before this man who has drunk so deeply from so many primary springs. Here is a man that can give us more of Joyce than can Joyce himself—that is, than we ourselves can reap without his help. Without Campbell’s revelations of Joyce’s redeeming qualities and the absurd lengths one must go to reach them, the Joyce lover is an inadequate pretender. But if Campbell can unearth what content is so intently hidden in Joyce, how can he not accentuate the enormous content that is meant to be unhidden in Schopenhauer, in Nietzsche, in Christ, Blake, Buddha, Black Elk, Wordsworth, Ortega y Gasset, Eliot, Mann, Jung, Shakespeare, The Upanishads, etc.? Indeed, one might better ask, what canon, that some significant sum of people holds or has held as most holy, has Campbell not thoroughly appraised himself of before gifting the world his declarations?

For those who allow their orientation to drift to the east, it becomes more and more apparent that in order to understand, what one needs more than intellect is courage.

“Creative Mythology, in Shakespeare’s sense, of the mirror ‘to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time of his form and pressure,’ springs not, like theology, from the dicta of authority, but from the insights, sentiments, thought, and vision of an adequate individual, loyal to his own experience of value. Thus it corrects the authority holding to the shells of forms produced and left behind by lives once lived. Renewing the act of experience itself, it restores to existence the quality of adventure, at once shattering and reintegrating the fixed, already known, in the sacrificial creative fire of the becoming thing that is no thing at all but life, not as it *will be* or as it *should be*, as it *was* or as it *never will be*, but as it *is*, in depth, in process, *here and now*, inside and out.”

Erik Akre says

The change in history from classical times to the Renaissance: nude paintings to represent the character of "man" the species, to portraits showing the character of the individual person. This description of visual art corresponds to the description of myth and personal transformation in *Creative Mythology*. It is the description of the mythic journey of the modern person. The mythological inspiration of our time is the following of a *trackless path* to genius.

No longer do we receive guidance on the Great Road. Since the time of the troubadours, who began to sing odes to individuals rather than to an ideal God who would damn them to hell, we must make our own way, creating our own face for God. No longer can we be told the answer. Rather, we create it. Thus is

individuation as we know it to be possible.

This work is written in an unimaginably large scope, gathering bits of mythology and philosophy from the Middle Ages and rolling them into mountainous ideas for our present times. From the troubadours, to 18th century philosophy, to Schopenhauer, to Jung, to Einstein's relativity, the nature of our current mythology takes shape. So now, each person is his own source of mythological guidance, depending on the absolute singularity of the self. It wasn't always this way...

Campbell says: Break the shackles of your conditioning and AWAKEN! Throw out the norms of the State and become your own individual person. No longer do you rely on mythology given to you by someone else, on the conditioning of the Nobody (the "State in which you were born," whatever that might be). Use that which you have inherited to break free and create your own mythology by which to live. This is individuation.

Follow your heart, I say. Fall in Love and lose yourself in the beauty of Life. Whatever you do, create art with the materials at your disposal, and when you have finished, birth yourself awake once again for new adventures.

Danns says

It's to give a rating for this book as I have not finished it yet. Unlike the previous volumes this takes a more focused look at the arts from the middle ages to the present. I'm only 150 pages or so into as of now.

Alright I finally finished the book. Yeah, it may sound like a bit of exasperation there and at some points it was. This volume was a bit more challenging to read I felt and did not flow as well as the first three volumes. I felt Campbell did a fantastic job reaching his point as "man as the author of his own destiny." He drew a lot from Nietzsche, Joyce, Mann, Dante, Goethe, and the Arthurian legends in this volume. There were points where he was long in the tooth but these were segmented by rapturous stories and references.

I'm really glad I took the time to read the entire series. I highly recommend them to everyone. Great stuff!

JW says

Because I always do things bass-ackwards I read Vol. 4 "...Creative Mythology" first. Coming from a Fine-Arts and creative writing background this was perfect because the author highlights the common mythological threads throughout literature, poetry, visual arts, religion et. al. Joseph Campbell is the only man that I have ever come across that knows everything about all mythology. If you have ANY interest in why we as human beings create the stories that we do and generally try to relate the experiences that we have to one another then I would recommend trying to read any of the "Masks Of God..." series.

Lisa (Harmonybites) says

Creative Mythology is the fourth and last volume in *Masks of God*. Up to this book, I thought the work had become stronger with each volume. The first book, *Primitive Mythology* published in 1959 by and large dealt

with the pre-historic era Campbell sees at the root of world culture, and so relied quite a bit on archeology and the speculations of such psychologists as Freud. It was very dry and I suspected, dated. The second volume, *Oriental Mythology*, primarily examined Egypt, India and China--and certainly made me want to read more--and reread Confucius and Lao Tzu in light of what I'd learned. In *Occidental Mythology*, Campbell examined the religious/mythological heritage of the West, both of the Greco-Roman classical world and the Levant as expressed in the scripture of Zoroasterism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Creative Mythology examines something quite different. Not the dogma found in scripture nor indigenous ritual and artifacts. Rather it examines the "living mythology" of literature, music and paintings. Campbell sees in the Renaissance the "dawning day and civilization of the individual" who seeks to be "not coercive, but evocative." Grounded in individualism, this new ethos is expressed both in the rise, or given classical culture, the return, of the idea of reason in the sciences but also in the ideal of romantic love found in the troubadours and Arthurian legends. Campbell also examines modern users and makers of mythos such as Wagner, Picasso, Thomas Mann--and giving in my opinion far too much space to James Joyce, but then I'm not a fan. I read Joyce's *Ulysses* only three months ago, so it, and how much I detested it, is fresh in my mind. With the previous volumes there was no doubt in my mind about the centrality and importance of the texts and artifacts Campbell was examining and he was at his fascinating best making connections between them. But in this volume where Campbell mostly plays literary critic, I found him at his most dull, tedious, repetitive and impenetrable. So though I gave the first volume 3 stars as worth reading, the next 4 stars as something I learned much from and the next one after that 5 stars for some amazing connections, insights and arguments, this last volume only gets two stars from me--and I'm being generous.

James says

This book demands multiple re-readings of the text. Campbell does what he does best - deconstruct mythology - and some of his ideas regarding creation and art are quite striking and fresh indeed.

While traditional mythologies are discussed here, (such as Le Morte d'Arthur) Campbell also likes to draw on distinctive and post-modern authors like Joyce and Mann when discussing novel mythological structures or narratives. This may be good or bad, depending on whether or not one likes these authors.

Ultimately, though, this book is meant to help one realize the varieties and depths of mythological experiences. And this book succeeds brilliantly in this.

Li says

I felt this seemed biased in waves of magnitudes catering to white lineage in world history exclusively or as a form of celebrating white-race creativeness. I didn't particularly feel any empathy for his choosing Joyce and Mann as his main examples for comparative writers to create a relationship to occidental mythology. Because these writers were primarily used as models exclusively to the occidental, I was deprived of Egyptian, moorish ; african mythology through out the book and of course I was aware that he primarily focused on the occidental, but this is not part of the title of the book, therefore I was led to conclude it was just written as an obsession and fascination with arthurian, occidental and whiteness in creativity and history; claiming the realm of modern writers and genius. He only mentions Egypt 3 times out of the mass of pages, which were too concentrated with incessant comparative excerpts from Joyce and Mann and then he even

inserts a cumbersome comparative essay on the Paraclete, which thickens the book with more nonsensical bantering of how white blue eyed people are favored. It seemed white supremacist condensed reading at most excruciating lengthy; I finished at last hating the book and wanting to burn it, but I am working on a "visible" or "physical" book collection of books read, and this will sit on the shelf unfortunately along with the other cumbersome irritating ethnographer, Manilovski. If you are going to read this book, the only chapter worth reading is the last chapter, which there's no escape from Egyptian mythology and god compared to Indian mythology as well as the writers and other occidental mythologies. He basically just bled nonstop about his fascination, obsessions with white race. The only parts I rarely found interesting were the refreshing excerpts from Schopenhauer and Schrodinger.

Matt says

I'm obsessed with Joseph Campbell, and his words of wisdom are like the ambrosia of the gods to my un-mythologized mind. I think just about everything he writes is amazing. But on the scale of "kinda amazing" to "really FREAKING amazing," this book falls more in the range of "kinda amazing." All of the other books in the series fell in the "really FREAKING amazing" range.

If you've read the other three books, no doubt you're going to read this one just to finish the series. So maybe my review is pointless. Maybe this will help you navigate the book before you read it, anyway. But nonetheless, as much as I still feel this book is necessary reading, I also feel that this is the worst of the Masks of God series. But worst in the Joseph Campbell sense really is still pretty amazing. Just certainly not as enjoyable as the other books. I was seriously quivering with anticipation to read this book -- I zipped through Occidental Mythology to get to this one, but quickly discovered that I should've taken my time on Occidental, instead, which was, in my opinion, much better, and probably the best in the series.

The problem with this book, in my mind, is that it doesn't cover nearly enough material as I've come to expect Campbell to cover. The book is pretty much 200 pages of Tristan and Isolde, 200 pages of Parzival, and 200 pages of fan-girling over Joyce and Mann, with some other fun bits thrown in here and there, like alchemy or the scientific revolution. As important as Tristan and Isolde and Parzival and Joyce and Mann are, reading about the same old ish for 200 pages at a time gets, um, how to put this lightly...EXCEEDINGLY TEDIOUS. He covered The Odyssey in about 20 pages in Occidental Mythology, and it was golden. I could've used a similar treatment for these myths, which gobbled up the entire book. It seemed that he was just repeating the same old analyses after a while.

What bothered me was that he had 1500 years of innovations to cover in this book, obviously with SO MANY examples he could've chosen, but instead, he focused merely on these three subjects. Granted, I don't want him to throw interpretations of every art or literary period ever in my face, but some variety would've been nice. The thing that always amazes me about Campbell is how he can draw these far-reaching, totally crazy comparisons between what seem to be completely different subjects, and MAKE IT WORK. And it's amazing. But in this book, there were hardly enough subjects there to even draw comparisons between.

Another issue for me was that the argumentation was kinda lacking in this one. I felt that a lot of time, he was just spinning his wheels, saying interesting things, but not with an end-point in mind. Obviously the book as a whole had an argumentative framework, but the subsections didn't really mesh well. I wasn't sure what exactly he was trying to build. But I kept on reading, trusting this amazing author to pull the rug out from under me at the last second and make an amazing web of intellectual interconnectedness. Alas, that never happened. And I often ended up finishing chapters and sections thinking, "Oh?"

Anyway. My recommendation for this book, if you're yet to proceed, is to NOT be afraid to skim this one when it seems to run off the tracks. While reading all of the other books, I scrutinized every word, because every word was damn important and loaded with wisdom. But this one sometimes rambles on with uninteresting and, to my eyes, anyway, insignificant information that I could really do without. For instance, I felt all the stuff with Joyce was interesting for about 10 pages, and then after that, was repetitive and didn't lead anywhere. And the alchemy section bored me to tears. It was a cool comparison, but didn't seem to make much of an impact at all on the argument. I know that some intellectual elitist out there is going to KILL me because I just said those things, but I'm just speaking from the point of view of someone who's too amateur to be intelligentsia.

Take what you can with this book and don't be precious about it. There are some amazing things that are to be learned from this book -- you just have to dig a little.

Jill says

The last in the series. As this was written nearly 40 years ago, many of the ending spots for the series feel unfinished....as it would since so many cultural trends have gone on, changed, AND reached back to the past. Reading all 4 volumes can be a revelation.....

Acid says

I loved the scholarship of this book...I learned that there was a christian sect that would eat the aborted fetuses of thier women, also, diana's priesthood and its bloody rights of passage, and many other things that have been believed by differant people at different times about god...joseph cambell a student of carl jungs wrote in four volumes a magnificent work...with implications on any creative persons ideas of myth and its role in life... deep book... mike seely and the acid tong

Mel says

I did not read this. I really want to like Joseph Campbell but I just can not get into it. This was so wordy. I found myself wishing he would get to the point.

Sidhartha says

All the major ways has been destroyed. We are in a desert and a dark forest now. And each of us should go alone...

Liked very much though I think in some parts Joseph has taken too long way to tell his story

Raymond says

Now that I'm experiencing Joseph Campbell as a careful adult reader, he comes off as a well-read charlatan, though probably well-meaning, throwing tons of random infodumps at his audience and then saying "see? It's all connected!" Also, no one in the late 1960s should have been talking seriously about an ancient, underlying Aryan culture. Racist much, Mr. Campbell?

Carolynne says

Like I'd say anything about my main man, Joseph Campbell? Always compelling, Always interesting, and what a wonderful storyteller. A man whose grace, kindness, and infinite intelligence, always shines through in his writing.
