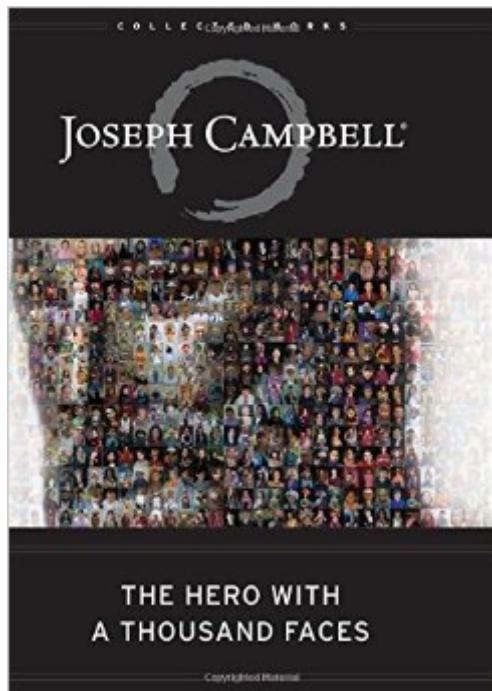


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# The Hero With A Thousand Faces (The Collected Works Of Joseph Campbell)



## Synopsis

Since its release in 1949, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* has influenced millions of readers by combining the insights of modern psychology with Joseph Campbell's revolutionary understanding of comparative mythology. In these pages, Campbell outlines the Hero's Journey, a universal motif of adventure and transformation that runs through virtually all of the world's mythic traditions. He also explores the Cosmogonic Cycle, the mythic pattern of world creation and destruction. As part of the Joseph Campbell Foundation's Collected Works of Joseph Campbell, this third edition features expanded illustrations, a comprehensive bibliography, and more accessible sidebars. As relevant today as when it was first published, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* continues to find new audiences in fields ranging from religion and anthropology to literature and film studies. The book has also profoundly influenced creative artists—including authors, songwriters, game designers, and filmmakers—and continues to inspire all those interested in the inherent human need to tell stories.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Joseph Campbell was one of the great souls of our age. I've read this book twice, first on my own and the second for a class in "Myth, Religion & the Mythic Imagination." I read the paperback to tatters, literally, marking each illuminating, exhilarating insight. "Dry"? "Not a fun read"? What book did YOU read? Campbell is unlike other writers on myth; he looks not at an entire myth but at its

parts. By the end of the book, he has essentially created the Ultimate Hero Myth, which takes bits of every hero myth from virtually every culture (heavy on Native Americans). Campbell was not a dispassionate academic--this was his gospel, and he lived by it. This book is alive and inspiring like no other book I know. One unique aspect of it at the time it was published was its approach to Christianity. For Campbell, Christ's life had to be seen as a myth. Before him, most Western scholars wouldn't have dare to say such a thing. Others had written on that, but in a skeptical manner. Campbell's view is that the Virgin Birth, miracles, Resurrection, etc have meaning only because they ARE myths. Look, there'd be no "Star Wars" without this. No "Sandman" comics from Neil Gaiman. No "Watership Down." This book is for the intellectual who wants to LIVE, not just to sit sterile at the desk. Recommended like mad.

First of all, I feel inadequate and unworthy to review this book, but since has given me the chance, all I can say is that this is one of the greatest Books (with a capital "B") of my experience. I suspect that it shall be recognised as one of the single greatest products to come out of 20th century American letters. No, I'm not setting Campbell up as a prophet or anything like that, indeed, I suspect that this book's greatness lies in the eternal truths that transcend Campbell's individual personality. He just managed to tap into them- thank God. The entire book deals with the hero's journey. This is the Monomyth shared by all cultures- and indeed seems to be a direct inspiration from the cosmos itself by way of the collective unconscious. Here we have the eternal cycle of 1) the call to adventure; 2) the crossing of the threshold; 3) the tests, trials, and helpers; 4) the sacred marriage, apotheosis (becoming one with god), or elixir theft; 5) the flight; 6) recrossing/ressurection; and 7) the return to society with hard won gifts. He examines all of these elements in depth with a wealth of cross-cultural examples. The first half of the book deals with this cycle on a more individual and personal level (the microcosm), while the second half deals with the greater cosmogonic importance (the macrocosm.) Now, the really amazing part of all this is that virtually all of it comes across as meaningful, interesting, and totally nonacademic. That's why academic types hate Campbell, and his mentor Jung,- they know that Campbell's and Jung's works will endure and be read a thousand years from now, while their own monographs will be justly forgotten. There are a lot of mediocre Ph.D's out there that can never forget that Campbell never bothered to get a doctorate, because he considered such degrees to be a worthless and meaningless waste of time.... I've read this particular edition three times now- it is well designed and manufactured and has resonable sized print. I've also listened to the entire audio version at least twice- it is well edited and it is very difficult to figure out where exactly it is abridged.

Joseph Campbell is a "love him or hate him" type of guy. The other reviews of his works that I have found on bear this out. The criticisms seem to be that his examples do not bear out his theories, that he relies on Freudian and Jungian psychology as "proof", and that people do not agree with his world-view. My response is this: we must bear in mind that Joseph Campbell was, above all things, a pioneer. A pioneer need not get everything right the first time out - he is setting up a new paradigm with which to view the world. Freud did not get everything right when he fathered modern psychoanalysis, but he created a new framework and steered it in the direction it needed to go. The *Hero with a Thousand Faces* is a comparative study of the religions and myths of the world. Its central theme is that all of their stories are essentially the same. They follow certain archetypal paths that are different in particular circumstances, but in general, follow the same overall arch. Now, this is not 100% true as even he admits - stories get changed around a bit and different things happen, but to the extent that he makes his point, the similarities are astonishing. His conclusion - or ONE possible interpretation - is that this reflects certain archetypal themes that are in every society's collective subconscious (Jung) and that these myths represent eternal truths about life...how to look at it and how to live it. Now, as to the criticism that his examples don't bear out his theories, Campbell states that he is just choosing an example or two to illustrate his point. The purpose of this book is not to be a comprehensive collection of the world's myths - that book is *The Golden Bough*. Campbell selects myths that the average reader may not be familiar with. While sometimes similarities may not be immediately apparent, it is open to disagreement as any essay on literature is. Campbell warns though that these myths must be ready as poetry, not prose - so beware of any callow analysis. Personally, I would have liked his using more familiar myths - especially Arthurian legends - to illustrate his point. As for his seeming to rely on Freud and Jung as gospel, that is a bit dated. Even so, the fact that his theories do jibe with Jungian psychology is significant - if not actual "proof" that he's right. And as for disagreements with his world-view, that is irrelevant. Campbell has developed a framework with which to view the world; you do not have to draw the same conclusions from it that he does. Campbell did not believe in a personal God, and I believe he is wrong about that. But the underlying message to me is that, even though people may have divergent beliefs about religion, the underlying ideas and values of religion ARE DEMONSTRABLY TRUE. Campbell goes through each stage of the hero's journey, with all its variations. This is meant not only as academia but it is for YOU - the READER. This is how one views one's own life. These ancient stories were not just for entertainment - they showed us how to live. That's what this book is for.

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