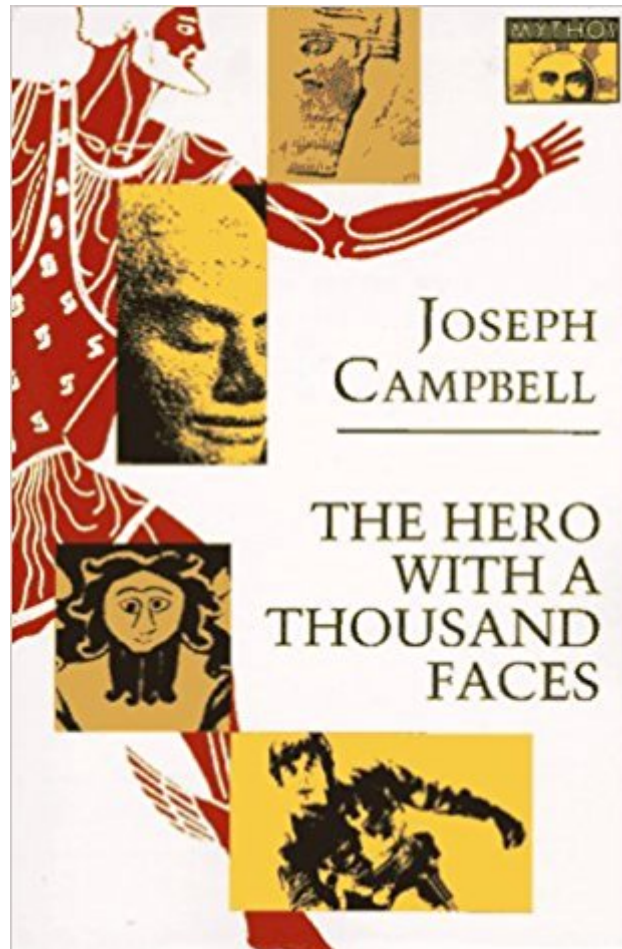


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# The Hero With A Thousand Faces (Bollingen Series, No. 17)



## Synopsis

Joseph Campbell's classic cross-cultural study of the hero's journey has inspired millions and opened up new areas of research and exploration. Originally published in 1949, the book hit the New York Times best-seller list in 1988 when it became the subject of *The Power of Myth*, a PBS television special. The first popular work to combine the spiritual and psychological insights of modern psychoanalysis with the archetypes of world mythology, the book creates a roadmap for navigating the frustrating path of contemporary life. Examining heroic myths in the light of modern psychology, it considers not only the patterns and stages of mythology but also its relevance to our lives today--and to the life of any person seeking a fully realized existence. Myth, according to Campbell, is the projection of a culture's dreams onto a large screen; Campbell's book, like *Star Wars*, the film it helped inspire, is an exploration of the big-picture moments from the stage that is our world. It is a must-have resource for both experienced students of mythology and the explorer just beginning to approach myth as a source of knowledge.

## Book Information

Paperback: 416 pages

Publisher: Princeton University Press; 2nd edition (March 1, 1972)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0691017840

ISBN-13: 978-0691017846

Product Dimensions: 8.7 x 6.1 x 1 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (420 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #26,133 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #20 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Mythology & Folk Tales > Fairy Tales](#) #64 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Folklore & Mythology](#) #242 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Occult & Paranormal](#)

## Customer Reviews

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/ressurrection; 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.

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.

All may roads may lead to Rome, but for me, this year, all books seemed to lead to Joseph

Campbell's Hero With 1000 Faces. I have discovered that this book is probably one of the most influential, widely read books of the 20th century. It's no wonder the author, Joseph Campbell, was featured in a Bill Moyers special on The Power of Myth (with an accompanying book, as usual for Bill Moyer's specials.) I was reading books on writing-- on story structure-- Particularly, Christopher Vogler's excellent Writer's Journey, and it was based on this book. Ironically, I was already reading another of Campbell's series of books on myth. But then I started looking deeper into this realm-- the idea of the Hero's journey, -- the call to adventure, refusing the call, finding a mentor, encountering threshold guardians, crossing the threshold, facing the worst evil, winning the elixir--- and I discovered that dozens of books have been written about the concepts Joseph Campbell first broached. It's such a powerful idea, and so useful in conceptualizing life's changes. I used it as an element in a presentation I just gave this past weekend on how the art and science of story can be applied to healing and helping people grow. 80% of the people attending the lecture were familiar with the concept. This is such powerful material, you might consider essential for helping you understand the way movies are made, and how the contemporary world has been affected by advertising and the loss of sacred rituals in everyday life. One way I gauge a book is by how many marks I make in the margins, to indicate wise ideas or quotable material ( I collect quotes, and quotation books big-time, owning over 400 quotation books) and this book's margins are just packed.

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