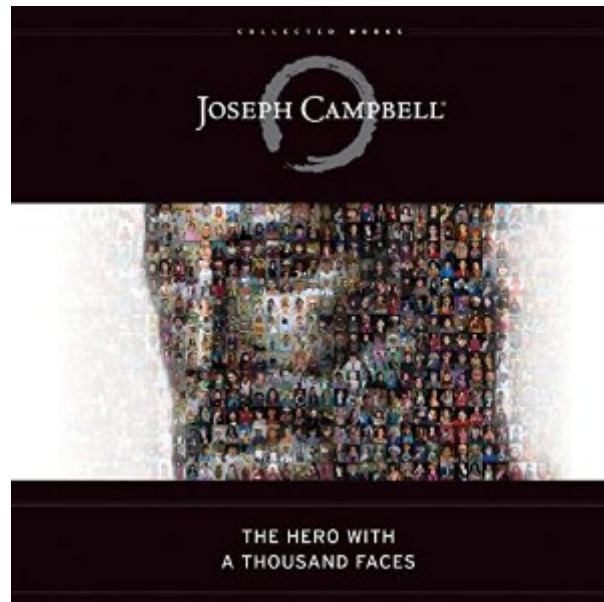


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The Hero With A Thousand Faces



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 this book, 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 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

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 14 hours and 38 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Brilliance Audio

Audible.com Release Date: February 3, 2016

Language: English

ASIN: B01BFBXOM8

Best Sellers Rank: #4 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling >

Psychoanalysis #5 in Books > Medical Books > Psychology > Movements > Psychoanalysis #9 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Folklore & Mythology

Customer Reviews

First of all, I feel inadequate and unworthy to review this book, but since I have been given 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/resurrection; 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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