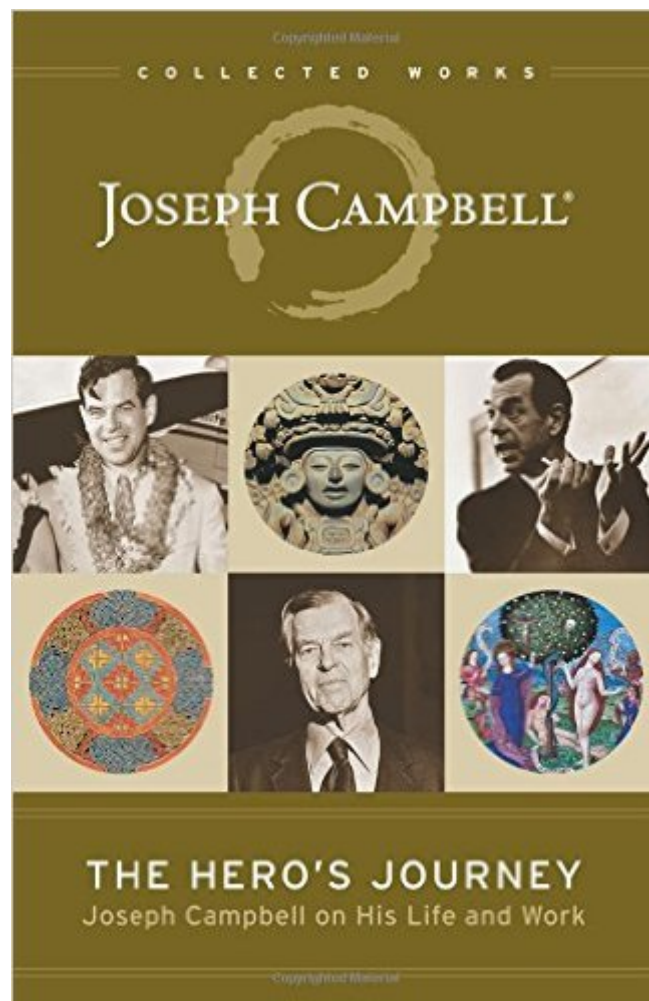


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The Hero's Journey: Joseph Campbell On His Life And Work (The Collected Works Of Joseph Campbell)



Synopsis

Joseph Campbell, arguably the greatest mythologist of the twentieth century, was certainly one of our greatest storytellers. This masterfully crafted book interweaves conversations between Campbell and some of the people he inspired, including poet Robert Bly, anthropologist Angeles Arrien, filmmaker David Kennard, Doors drummer John Densmore, psychiatric pioneer Stanislov Grof, Nobel laureate Roger Guillemin, and others. Campbell reflects on subjects ranging from the origins and functions of myth, the role of the artist, and the need for ritual to the ordeals of love and romance. With poetry and humor, Campbell recounts his own quest and conveys the excitement of his lifelong exploration of our mythic traditions, what he called "the one great story of mankind."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Each chapter of this book begins with a biographical narrative, followed by excerpts from myriad interviews with Campbell, organized in such a way that the interview topics follow the biographical line of the book. Jean Erdman, Stuart Brown, Phil Cousineau, Robert Bly, John Densmore and many more appear in the interviews with Campbell. The book also contains a complete timeline of Campbell's life and a list of books written or edited by Campbell. Note that this is a collection and is not as comprehensive a biography as 'A Fire In The Mind.' But what it misses in magnitude and detail, it makes up for in presentation. The book lends itself to both the page-through and in-depth

readers. It is full of photographs (some full page) and highlights many of Campbell's memorable quotes. In a beautifully written introduction, Phil Cousineau refers to Campbell as the "ecstatic scholar", an "animateur" who was capable of evoking "the telling shiver of truth about your own life." This book re-animates Campbell's work and he is capable as ever, through the interviews on these pages, of speaking to the heart of his listeners and reawakening the mysteries of life with enthusiasm and awe. (I do also recommend 'A Fire In The Mind,' which contains details of Campbell's life and excerpts from his personal journals that are not included in this work.)

I read this as one who was unfamiliar with Joseph Campbell and his remarkable insights into myths and their role in our lives. The claim is made in the book that at some time in the 1980s, seven or eight of the top ten grossing films of all time were in some way based on material originating in Campbell's books. That makes Campbell a man whose thoughts are worth learning about. The book is in general fairly easy reading, since much of it is transcribed from conversations involving Campbell. Quotable quotes abound: "myths have to do with how you live your life", "the young male is a compulsively violent piece of biology", "when people say they're looking for the meaning of life, what they're really looking for is a deep experience of it", "the best thing I can say is follow your bliss". If you want to be inspired by a life lived thoughtfully and well, you should find this book rewarding.

Those are the only words I can think of to describe this fabulous book! Not only do you get a picture of Campbell the man in a way you can't elsewhere, except maybe in the diaries of his Asian trips, but you also get a wonderful insight into the mythology that was his life's work. It's like being able to look through both sides of a lens at once! There are lovely pictures of Campbell, his friends and family that are literally breathtaking--they are part of that lens. The book itself is made up of a series of conversations and panel discussions involving Campbell and a number of his friends and colleagues--including his wife, choreographer Jean Erdman and artists like George Lucas, Robert Bly and Richard Adams. It is structured so that it follows Campbell's life story in the shape of his Hero Journey, as laid out in *Hero with a Thousand Faces*. The cover announces this as the Centennial Edition, which alerted me to the fact that Campbell would have been 100 this upcoming March. What a wonderful way to celebrate the life of a man whose joy (bliss) has inspired so many, and to take more inspiration from his ideas.

For those who once bemoaned there being no autobiography by (or biography of) Joseph Campbell

this book fills a void. For those who have watched The Power of Myth videos, and read several Joseph Campbell books, this collection of high-power dialogues with Campbell is no disappointment. No intimate details are given of Campbell's life, however, When asked for autobiographical details during one session, Campbell responds (more or less): "That's biography, and I don't do biography". Campbell relays several anecdotes of his friends Robinson and Zimmer, and gives honorable mention to the Bollingen Press and Sarah Lawrence College for crucial assistance in his career development. Particularly of interest are the frequent remarks concerning, and discussions with, his wife (and former student) Jean Erdman. While many of Campbell's remarks are near-verbatim replies heard in The Power of Myth videos, some are unreleased gems: There are two kinds of people in this world - those who know their myth is a fact (the orthodox religious) and those who know their myth is a lie (the atheists)- both KNOW that their myth is most certainly NOT a metaphor. While insightful, Reader Be Warned that while Campbell is a magnificent Humanities guru he is an abysmal theologian - a Modernist who claimed God never spoke to man and that all religions are simply metaphors of a great unknown spiritual mystery. Good book.

Joseph Campbell personifies what it means to live as an integrated human being. In fact, he is unabashedly human. While it may be tempting to read this brief introduction and summary of his life, philosophy, and work with a critical eye, it would be more growth-promoting to non-judgementally go for the ride. One may say he led a charmed life, but it was a life he chose and sacrificed for. By making the choices he made, he set in motion the theory which has come to personify his life: Follow your bliss and what you need will follow. Nor does Campbell claim it will be a path strewn with roses. On the contrary, the task for each initiate is to maneuver the virginal path, replete with challenges and rejection. A reductionistic position toward his life and work neglects the unknown day-to-day struggles we all confront. No one, but no one is able to avoid this one fact of life, regardless of socio-economic bracket or level of personal/professional success. Would you like to read something new, something well-thought out? If yes, read this book. Do you want to take the easy road and criticize? If yes, good luck with that. This man spent five Great Depression years studying classical works within multiple genres. On a full-time basis. That would translate into twenty years of our current attention span. Crib notes will be useless - This is not a cocktail party. Criticism is easy. You need not agree. What is life but reveling in the differences? He who cannot draw on three thousand years is living from hand to mouth [Goethe]. Take a trip with Joseph Campbell. What's the worst that can happen? CS Marvel

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