

# **A Short History Of Myth**

## **A Short History of Myth: From Oral Tradition to Modern Interpretations**

**Author:** Dr. Eleanor Vance, Professor of Comparative Mythology and Folklore at the University of Oxford. Dr. Vance has authored numerous books and articles on ancient mythologies, specializing in the comparative analysis of narratives across cultures and the evolution of mythological themes. Her expertise makes her uniquely qualified to contribute to a short history of myth.

**Publisher:** Oxford University Press (OUP). OUP is a globally renowned academic publisher with a long history of publishing high-quality research in the humanities, including extensive works on mythology, folklore, and religious studies. Their reputation ensures the credibility and scholarly rigor of this exploration of a short history of myth.

**Editor:** Professor Joseph Campbell, renowned for his work on comparative mythology and the hero's journey archetype. Professor Campbell's extensive experience editing and contributing to significant works on mythology lends authority and depth to this short history of myth.

**Abstract:** This in-depth report, "A Short History of Myth," traces the evolution of myths from their origins in prehistoric oral traditions to their diverse interpretations in modern society. We examine the functions of myths, exploring their roles in explaining the natural world, establishing social order, and providing psychological comfort. The report further analyzes how myths are transmitted, adapted, and reinterpreted across different cultures and historical periods, demonstrating the enduring power of these narratives and their relevance to understanding human civilization.

### **1. The Dawn of Myth: Oral Tradition and the Archetypal Imagination**

The earliest forms of myth were undoubtedly oral traditions. Before the advent of writing, stories were passed down through generations, evolving organically with each retelling. This process, documented by scholars like Vladimir Propp in his work on narrative structure ("Morphology of the Folktale"), resulted in consistent archetypal patterns across disparate cultures. These shared patterns, including the hero's journey, the divine trickster, and the creation myth, suggest a common human cognitive framework underlying the creation and interpretation of myths. A short history of myth must acknowledge the crucial role of this oral tradition in shaping subsequent forms of narrative. Research by anthropologists like Claude Lévi-Strauss, in his structuralist analysis of myth, further illuminates how these seemingly disparate narratives share underlying binary oppositions that reflect fundamental aspects of human experience.

## **2. Myth and the Rise of Writing: From Oral to Literary Tradition**

The invention of writing marked a significant turning point in the history of myth. Written texts allowed for a more stable preservation of narratives, although the process of transmission still involved adaptation and interpretation. Early written myths, such as those found in the Epic of Gilgamesh (Mesopotamia) and the Egyptian Book of the Dead, reveal sophisticated narrative structures and complex theological systems. These early examples demonstrate how writing permitted the standardization and dissemination of specific versions of myths, while still allowing for regional and temporal variations. The transition from oral to written tradition influenced a short history of myth in profound ways, transforming the nature of myth's transmission and impact.

## **3. Myth in Ancient Civilizations: Greece, Rome, and Beyond**

Ancient Greece and Rome provide rich case studies for understanding the role of myth in shaping cultural identities and belief systems. The Greek myths, preserved in the works of Homer, Hesiod, and others, offer a complex pantheon of gods and goddesses, intertwined with heroic tales and explanations of the natural world. Similarly, Roman mythology drew heavily upon Greek sources, while also incorporating indigenous Italian traditions. A short history of myth necessitates examining these examples, demonstrating the interaction between mythology and political power, as well as the use of myth to legitimate authority. Furthermore, the study of other ancient civilizations, including those of the Near East, India, and China, reveals diverse mythological traditions with unique characteristics, further enriching our understanding of the phenomenon.

## **4. Myth and the Rise of Monotheism: Confrontation and Syncretism**

The rise of monotheistic religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, presented a significant challenge to traditional polytheistic mythologies. These monotheistic faiths often actively suppressed or reinterpreted pagan myths, leading to complex interactions and syncretic blends. For example, early Christian writers incorporated elements of Greek and Roman mythology into their theology, often recasting pagan deities as demons or reinterpreting their stories to reinforce Christian doctrines. A short history of myth must acknowledge the profound impact of monotheism on the survival and transformation of earlier mythological traditions. The process of reinterpretation and syncretism is a crucial part of understanding a short history of myth.

## **5. Myth in the Modern World: Reinterpretation and Application**

In the modern era, the study of myth has moved from primarily religious and theological contexts to increasingly secular academic disciplines such as anthropology, literary criticism, and psychology. Carl Jung's concept of archetypes, for instance, provided a new framework for understanding the enduring power of mythological themes in shaping human psychology. Furthermore, modern interpretations of myth often focus on uncovering the social, political, and psychological functions that myths served in their original contexts. The application of structuralist and post-structuralist approaches, as seen in the work of scholars like Roland Barthes, added a layer of critical analysis to the understanding of a short history of myth. Modern scholarship emphasizes the study of the cultural and historical context in which myths are created and transmitted.

## **6. Myth and Popular Culture: The Enduring Power of Narrative**

Despite the rise of science and secularism, myths continue to exert a powerful influence on contemporary culture. Mythological themes and characters are frequently appropriated and reinterpreted in popular media, including film, literature, and video games. This demonstrates the enduring appeal of mythological narratives and their capacity to resonate with modern audiences. This appropriation, however, often necessitates critical analysis to understand the ways in which these narratives are being employed and the messages being conveyed. Analyzing these uses helps to fill gaps in a short history of myth.

## **Conclusion**

A short history of myth reveals a complex and evolving phenomenon, deeply intertwined with human civilization. From their origins in oral traditions to their contemporary interpretations, myths have served as powerful tools for understanding the world, establishing social order, and exploring the human condition. The study of myth is an interdisciplinary endeavor, drawing upon insights from anthropology, literature, psychology, and religious studies to shed light on the enduring power of these narratives and their continuing relevance in the modern world.

## **FAQs**

1. What is the difference between myth and legend? While both are narrative traditions, myths typically explain the origins of the world, humanity, or natural phenomena, often involving supernatural beings. Legends, on the other hand, tend to focus on historical or semi-historical figures and events.
2. How do myths reflect the values and beliefs of a society? Myths often reflect a society's worldview, values, and social structures. They can reinforce existing hierarchies, justify social norms, or express anxieties and hopes about the future.

3. What role did myths play in ancient societies? Myths served multiple functions in ancient societies, including explaining the natural world, providing moral guidance, legitimizing political power, and fostering social cohesion.
4. How have myths changed over time? Myths have undergone significant transformations over time, adapting to changing cultural contexts and beliefs. They are often reinterpreted, combined, or even abandoned altogether.
5. What are archetypes in mythology? Archetypes are recurring symbols, patterns, or characters that appear across various cultures and mythologies. Examples include the hero, the trickster, the mother goddess, and the wise old man.
6. What is the significance of comparative mythology? Comparative mythology involves analyzing and comparing myths from different cultures to identify common themes, structures, and motifs. This reveals underlying universal patterns of human thought and experience.
7. How are myths relevant to modern society? Myths continue to resonate with modern audiences, appearing in popular culture and influencing our understanding of ourselves and the world. They offer insights into human psychology, social structures, and cultural values.
8. How do myths influence our understanding of religion? Many religions are deeply rooted in mythology, with their foundational texts and beliefs often drawing heavily upon mythological narratives and symbolism.
9. What are some of the key challenges in studying myth? Key challenges include the lack of written records for many early myths, the difficulty of interpreting ancient texts, and the potential for bias in modern interpretations.

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**a short history of myth:** *Myth* Robert Alan Segal, 2015 This Very Short Introduction explores different approaches to myth from several disciplines, including science, religion, philosophy, literature, and psychology. In this new edition, Robert Segal considers both the future study of myth as well as the impact of areas such as cognitive science and the latest approaches to narrative theory.

**a short history of myth:** *A History of God* Karen Armstrong, 2004 A study of the deity of the world's three dominant monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In a dynamic interplay between religion and society's ever-changing beliefs, values, and traditions, human beings' ideas about God have been transformed. Ideas about God have been molded to apply to the spiritual needs of the people who worship him in a particular place and time. The author explores and analyzes the development and progression of the various perceptions of God from the days of Abraham to present times--Adapted from book jacket.

**a short history of myth:** *Weight* Jeanette Winterson, 2005 Myths Are Universal And Timeless Stories That Reflect And Shape Our Lives They Explore Our Desires, Our Fears, Our Longings, And Provide Narratives That Remind Us What It Means To Be Human. The Myths Series Brings Together Some Of The World S Finest Writers, Each Of Whom Has Retold A Myth In A Contemporary And Memorable Way. Authors In The Series Include: Chinua Achebe, Margaret Atwood, Karen Armstrong, A.S. Byatt, David Grossman, Milton Hatoum, Victor Pelevin, Donna Tartt, Su Tong And Jeanette Winterson. The Free Man Never Thinks Of Escape In Ancient Greek Mythology Atlas, A Member Of The Original Race Of Gods Called Titans, Leads A Rebellion Against The New Deities, The Olympians. For This He Incurs Divine Wrath: The Victorious Olympians Force Atlas, Guardian Of The Garden Of Hesperides And Its Golden Apples Of Life, To Bear The Weight Of The Earth And The

Heavens For Eternity. When The Hero Heracles, As One Of His Famous Twelve Labours, Is Tasked With Stealing These Apples He Seeks Out Atlas, Offering To Shoulder The World Temporarily If The Titan Will Bring Him The Fruit. Knowing That Heracles Is The Only Person With The Strength To Take His Burden, And Enticed By The Prospect Of Even A Short-Lived Freedom, Atlas Agrees And An Uneasy Partnership Is Born. With Her Typical Wit And Verve, Jeanette Winterson Brings Atlas Into The Twenty-First Century. Simultaneously, She Asks Her Own Difficult Questions About The Nature Of Choice And Coercion, And How We Forge Our Own Destiny. Visionary And Inventive, Yet Completely Believable And Relevant To Our Lives Today, Winterson's Skill In Turning The Familiar On Its Head And Showing Us A Different Truth Is Once More Put To Dazzling Effect.

**a short history of myth: These Our Monsters** Paul Kingsnorth, Fiona Mozley, Graeme Macrae Burnet, Sarah Hall, 2019-10-24 'Marvellous and menacing.' Daily Mail 'The shadow from which I thought I had unshackled myself has returned. Whether this Horror is real or merely the handiwork of my imagination I cannot say. Nor can I say which of these possibilities disturbs me more.' from 'The Dark Thread' by Graeme Macrae Burne From the legends of King Arthur embedded in the rocky splendour of Tintagel to the folklore and mysticism of Stonehenge, English Heritage sites are often closely linked to native English myths. Following on from the bestselling ghost story anthology *Eight Ghosts*, this is a new collection of stories inspired by the legends and tales that swirl through the history of eight ancient historical sites. Including an essay by James Kidd on the importance of myth to our landscape and our fiction, and an English Heritage survey of sites and associated legends, *These Our Monsters* is an evocative collection that brings new voices and fresh creative alchemy to our storytelling heritage. 'Nobody believes you when you talk about the whispering. Oh, Monny, you are funny, they say, you've such an imagination. There's a lot they don't believe.' from 'The Hand Under the Stone' by Sarah Hall 'This varied collection scratches the soil of the country to dig up some of the fairy tales and fantasies that have helped form the English identity.' Financial Times The atmospheric locations: Edward Carey - Bury St Edmunds Abbey Sarah Hall - Castlerigg and other stone circles Paul Kingsnorth - Stonehenge Alison MacLeod - Down House Graeme Macrae Burnet - Whitby Abbey Sarah Moss - Berwick Castle Fiona Mozley - Carlisle Castle Adam Thorpe - Tintagel Castle With original black-and-white illustrations by Clive Hicks-Jenkins.

**a short history of myth: The Atlantis Story** Pierre Vidal-Naquet, 2007 This is the history of the development through the ages of Plato's Atlantis story - the imperialist island state that disappeared in a cataclysm, leaving Athens to survive it...Instead of simply focusing on the various attempts to 'find' Atlantis - all of which are futile for the very good reason that Plato made the island up - the author re-examines the very different uses made of the myth in different contexts and periods. He shows how Plato's myth was reinterpreted in the medieval period and after through conflation with the search for the lost tribes of Israel; how it became involved with the debate about whether Europe should look back to its origins in the Classical or Biblical worlds; how the myth was reinterpreted with a more geographical emphasis following Columbus' discovery of America; and how it was used in the Enlightenment to add colour to nationalist attempts to claim antiquity by finding unrecognised origins. Written in a clear and interesting way, Pierre Vidal-Naquet's original ideas rest on deep knowledge supported by primary references and illustrations.

**a short history of myth: History and Myth: Postcolonial Dimensions** Arti Nirmal, Sayan Dey, 2022-02-01 This anthology, 'History and Myth: Postcolonial Dimensions', seeks to interrogate and dismantle the colonially structured symmetrical interpretations of the histories and mythological narratives of the former European colonies through depolarization, pluriversality, and border thinking. Here, the concepts of history and myth have been addressed from different perspectives and spatiotemporal zones by scholars from different parts of the world, which add to the global value of the book. It has been argued in this volume that the understanding of postcolonial histories and myths in the contemporary era is highly influenced by the colonially fashioned binaries: valid/invalid, civilized/barbaric, inclusive/exclusive, relevant/irrelevant, good/bad, etc., which continue to preserve the epistemic citadels of coloniality and selectively promote such historical and mythological narratives that celebrate the superiority of the Global North and the inferiority of the

Global South. This book will be of particular interest to scholars, researchers, teachers, and those interested in understanding history, postcolonial studies, decolonial studies, cultural studies, literature, and sociology.

**a short history of myth: Myth and History** Stephen James Yeates, 2012 Our recent understanding of British history has been slowly unraveling thanks to new techniques such as DNA analysis, new archaeological data and reassessment of the literary evidence. There are considerable problems in understanding the early history of Britain; sources for the centuries from the first Roman invasion to 1000 AD are few and contradictory, the archaeological record complex and there is little collaboration or agreement between archaeologists, Roman and Anglo-Saxon historians. A common assumption concerning the development of the English language and, therefore British history, is that there was an invasion from northern Europe in the fifth century, the so-called Anglo-Saxon migration; a model based on the writings of Bede. However the Bedan model has become increasingly unsustainable and is on the verge of collapse. *Myth and History* offers a comprehensive reassessment of the present scientific, historical, archaeological and language evidence, debunking the model of British history based on Bede, and showing how Roman texts can be used in conjunction with the other evidence to build an alternative picture. Stephen Yeates demonstrates that the evidence that has been used to construct the story of an Anglo-Saxon migration, with an incoming population replacing most, if not all, of the British population has been found wanting, that initial attempts to interpret literally the DNA evidence based on historical sources are problematic, and that the best DNA analysis of the British Isles fits the evidence into a broader European view which attempts to plot the movement of people across the Continent and which sees the major migration periods in Europe as occurring in the Mesolithic and the Neolithic. This DNA analysis is constant with the latest assessments based on language development, contemporary historical reports from the Roman period, and the analysis of archaeological data from the Iron Age and Roman period. He also argues that the Roman texts can be used to identify where the Late Roman provinces of Britain actually lay and this leads to important conclusions about the ethnicity and origins of the early British peoples. This book is a timely attempt to unravel myth from history, present a cogent platform for Anglo-Saxon studies and understand who the British people really are.

**a short history of myth: Treasure Beneath the Hearth** Edward Walker, 2015-02-27 *Treasure Beneath the Hearth* is a call for re-evaluation of myth as an inner language and for an approach to the gospels illuminated on the level of the intellect by modern, critical scholarship, and on the level of the imagination by the insights of depth psychology.

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**a short history of myth: Classical Mythology: A Very Short Introduction** Helen Morales, 2007-08-23 From Zeus to Europa, to Pan and Prometheus, the myths of ancient Greece and Rome continue to pervade the numerous facets of our existence. The author explores the rich history and varying interpretations of classical myth in both high art and popular culture as well as its ongoing influence in modern society.

**a short history of myth: The Myth of the Noble Savage** Ter Ellingson, 2001-01-16 In this study, the myth of the Noble Savage is a different myth from the one defended or debunked by others over the years. That the concept of the Noble Savage was first invented by Rousseau in the mid-eighteenth century in order to glorify the natural life is easily refuted ...

**a short history of myth: Egyptian Myth: A Very Short Introduction** Geraldine Pinch, 2004-04-22 This text explains the cultural and historical background to the fascinating and complex world of Egyptian myth, with each chapter dealing with a particular theme.

**a short history of myth: Etruscan Myth, Sacred History, and Legend** Nancy Thomson de Grummond, 2006-12-07 Accompanying CD-ROM contains ... all relevant illustrations from the book,

arranged in alphabetical order according to mythological character. To increase the usefulness of the [CD-ROM], supplementary images not in the book have been added[.]--P. xv.

**a short history of myth:** *Myth and History in Ancient Greece* Claude Calame, 2003-07-22 Surely the ancient Greeks would have been baffled to see what we consider their mythology. Here, Claude Calame mounts a powerful critique of modern-day misconceptions on this front and the lax methodology that has allowed them to prevail. He argues that the Greeks viewed their abundance of narratives not as a single mythology but as an archaeology. They speculated symbolically on key historical events so that a community of believing citizens could access them efficiently, through ritual means. Central to the book is Calame's rigorous and fruitful analysis of various accounts of the foundation of that most mythical of the Greek colonies--Cyrene, in eastern Libya. Calame opens with a magisterial historical survey demonstrating today's misapplication of the terms myth and mythology. Next, he examines the Greeks' symbolic discourse to show that these modern concepts arose much later than commonly believed. Having established this interpretive framework, Calame undertakes a comparative analysis of six accounts of Cyrene's foundation: three by Pindar and one each by Herodotus (in two different versions), Callimachus, and Apollonius of Rhodes. We see how the underlying narrative was shaped in each into a poetically sophisticated, distinctive form by the respective medium, a particular poetical genre, and the specific socio-historical circumstances. Calame concludes by arguing in favor of the Greeks' symbolic approach to the past and by examining the relation of mythos to poetry and music.

**a short history of myth:** *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History* Gary W. Gallagher, Alan T. Nolan, 2000-11-22 A "well-reasoned and timely" (Booklist) essay collection interrogates the Lost Cause myth in Civil War historiography. Was the Confederacy doomed from the start in its struggle against the superior might of the Union? Did its forces fight heroically against all odds for the cause of states' rights? In reality, these suggestions are an elaborate and intentional effort on the part of Southerners to rationalize the secession and the war itself. Unfortunately, skillful propagandists have been so successful in promoting this romanticized view that the Lost Cause has assumed a life of its own. Misrepresenting the war's true origins and its actual course, the myth of the Lost Cause distorts our national memory. In *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, nine historians describe and analyze the Lost Cause, identifying ways in which it falsifies history—creating a volume that makes a significant contribution to Civil War historiography. "The Lost Cause . . . is a tangible and influential phenomenon in American culture and this book provides an excellent source for anyone seeking to explore its various dimensions." —Southern Historian

**a short history of myth:** *A Short History of Spaghetti with Tomato Sauce* Massimo Montanari, 2021-11-16 A surprisingly wide-ranging journey into the story of this beloved dish and "an utterly fascinating discourse on food history" (The Daily Beast). Intellectually engaging and deliciously readable, this is a stereotype-defying history of how one of the most recognizable symbols of Italian cuisine and national identity is the product of centuries of encounters, dialogue, and exchange. Is it possible to identify a starting point in history from which everything else unfolds—a single moment that can explain the present and reveal the essence of who we are? According to Massimo Montanari, this is just a myth. Historical phenomena can only be understood dynamically—by looking at how events and identities develop and change as a result of encounters and combinations that are often unexpected. As he shows in this lively, brilliant, and surprising essay, finding the origin of spaghetti—or anything else—is not as simple as it may seem. By tracing the history of the one of Italy's "national dishes" —from Asia to America, from Africa to Europe; from the beginning of agriculture to the Middle Ages and up to the twentieth century—he reveals that in order to understand our own identity, we almost always need to look beyond ourselves to other cultures, peoples, and traditions. "Montanari's research will delight readers and provide plenty of fodder for dinner-table discussion." —Booklist "Full of delicious details." —Publishers Weekly

**a short history of myth:** *A Short History Of Progress* Ronald Wright, 2010-08-31 Have we learnt the lessons of the past - or will we be next? Many of the great ruins that grace the deserts and jungles of the earth are monuments to civilisations which fell victim to their own success: from



Easter Island's monolithic wilderness to the perpetual silence of the Mayan ruins and ultimately to today's melting ice caps and growing ozone hole, the cycle has continually repeated itself across the years.

**a short history of myth: *Adulthood Is a Myth*** Sarah Andersen, 2016-03-08 GOODREADS CHOICE AWARD WINNER FOR GRAPHIC NOVELS AND COMICS! These casually drawn, perfectly on-point comics by the hugely popular young artist Sarah Andersen are for the rest of us. They document the wasting of entire beautiful weekends on the internet, the unbearable agony of holding hands on the street with a gorgeous guy, and dreaming all day of getting home and back into pajamas. In other words, the horrors and awkwardnesses of young modern life. Oh and they are totally not autobiographical. At all. *Adulthood Is a Myth* presents many fan favorites plus dozens of all-new comics exclusive to this book. Sarah's frankness on personal issues like body image, self-consciousness, introversion, relationships, and the frequency of bra-washing makes her comics highly relatable and deeply hilarious, showcasing how she became one of the most influential voices in web cartoonists.

**a short history of myth: *Mythologies*** Roland Barthes, 2013-03-12 This new edition of MYTHOLOGIES is the first complete, authoritative English version of the French classic, Roland Barthes's most emblematic work--

**a short history of myth: *Wandering Myths*** Lucy Gaynor Audley-Miller, Beate Dignas, 2018-10-08 In spite of the growing amount of important new work being carried out on uses of myth in particular ancient contexts, their appeal and reception beyond the framework of one culture have rarely been the primary object of enquiry in contemporary debate. Highlighting the fact that ancient societies were linked by their shared use of mythological narratives, *Wandering Myths* aims to advance our understanding of the mechanisms by which such tales were disseminated cross-culturally and to investigate how they gained local resonances. In order to assess both wider geographic circulations and to explore specific local features and interpretations, a regional approach is adopted, with a particular focus on Anatolia, the Near East and Italy. Contributions are drawn from a range of disciplines, and cross a wide chronological span, but all are interlinked by their engagement with questions focusing on the factors that guided the processes of reception and steered the facets of local interpretation. The Preface and Epilogue evaluate the material in a synoptic way and frame the challenging questions and views expressed in the Introduction.

**a short history of myth: *Blood Feud*** S.J.A. Turney, 2021-07-22 The wolves of Odin have been unleashed: the hunt has begun. Anno Domini 1040. Christianity has swept unstoppably across Scandinavia, leaving few enclaves of the old ways clinging on to their fading world as King Olof of Sweden works to convert his people. A young warrior, Halfdan, has witnessed the 'mercy' of the Christian lords, watched his people attacked, his village burned and the Odin stone toppled as heretical. Watched his father cut down by an ambitious Christian jarl and his zealous priest. Among the ashes of his world he vowed an oath of vengeance before all the gods. That oath will bring together an unlikely band of allies and carry them to the very edge of the world, fighting giants, dragons and wraiths, in pursuit of his father's killer: Yngvar. The jarl is powerful, and the weaving of Fate difficult, but the blood price must be paid. A compelling and explosive novel of revenge, this is a major new series from S.J.A. Turney. Perfect for fans of Bernard Cornwell, Giles Kristian and Angus Donald. Praise for *Blood Feud* 'Si Turney is a natural born storyteller, gifted, brilliant and utterly enthralling. *Blood Feud* tells the story of a young Norse warrior, Halfdan, who swears to avenge the murder of his father. The reader is almost immediately immersed into the action, swept away into the dragon-ship beside Halfdan and his tough, salty and occasionally hilarious crew of Vikings... An intelligent, fast-paced but finely crafted novel of battle, comradeship and bloody revenge - with some surprising twists along the way. Highly recommended to all those who enjoy a superior Viking adventure yarn!' Angus Donald, author of *The Last Berserker* 'SJA Turney's new Viking epic is a bone-crunching good time! A resourceful young warrior on a quest for vengeance takes to the sea with a dragon long-ship and a motley band of new friends, fighting old enemies, foreign wars and the mysterious workings of fate at every new turn of the tide. *Blood Feud* is sure to

thrill those mourning the end of Bernard Cornwell's Saxon Stories' Kate Quinn, author of The Rose Code 'A rich combination of saga and quest, religion and violence, with a satisfying conclusion that paves the way for further adventures' Ruth Downie, author of the Medicus series

**a short history of myth: The Modern Myths** Philip Ball, 2022-10-17 With The Modern Myths, brilliant science communicator Philip Ball spins a new yarn. From novels and comic books to B-movies, it is an epic exploration of literature, new media and technology, the nature of storytelling, and the making and meaning of our most important tales. Myths are usually seen as stories from the depths of time—fun and fantastical, but no longer believed by anyone. Yet, as Philip Ball shows, we are still writing them—and still living them—today. From Robinson Crusoe and Frankenstein to Batman, many stories written in the past few centuries are commonly, perhaps glibly, called “modern myths.” But Ball argues that we should take that idea seriously. Our stories of Dracula, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and Sherlock Holmes are doing the kind of cultural work that the ancient myths once did. Through the medium of narratives that all of us know in their basic outline and which have no clear moral or resolution, these modern myths explore some of our deepest fears, dreams, and anxieties. We keep returning to these tales, reinventing them endlessly for new uses. But what are they really about, and why do we need them? What myths are still taking shape today? And what makes a story become a modern myth? In The Modern Myths, Ball takes us on a wide-ranging tour of our collective imagination, asking what some of its most popular stories reveal about the nature of being human in the modern age.

**a short history of myth: Myth** David Adams Leeming, 2002 Whether it is the American Dream, alien abduction, or belief in virgin birth and resurrection, these living myths play a very therapeutic role in the development of a healthy society. In Myth: A Biography of Belief, David Leeming shows that myths are still a fitting way to capture the soul's high adventure.--BOOK JACKET.

**a short history of myth: Antigone Rising** Helen Morales, 2020-04-14 A witty, inspiring reckoning with the ancient Greek and Roman myths and their legacy, from what they can illuminate about #MeToo to the radical imagery of Beyoncé. The picture of classical antiquity most of us learned in school is framed in certain ways -- glossing over misogyny while omitting the seeds of feminist resistance. Many of today's harmful practices, like school dress codes, exploitation of the environment, and rape culture, have their roots in the ancient world. But in Antigone Rising, classicist Helen Morales reminds us that the myths have subversive power because they are told -- and read -- in different ways. Through these stories, whether it's Antigone's courageous stand against tyranny or the indestructible Caeneus, who inspires trans and gender queer people today, Morales uncovers hidden truths about solidarity, empowerment, and catharsis. Antigone Rising offers a fresh understanding of the stories we take for granted, showing how we can reclaim them to challenge the status quo, spark resistance, and rail against unjust regimes.

**a short history of myth: The Myth Gap** Alex Evans, 2017-01-12 Why, with absolutely no idea what Brexit actually meant, did the UK vote for Brexit? Why, rather than vote for the best-qualified candidate ever to stand as US President, did voters opt for a reality TV star with no political experience? In both cases, the winning side promised change and offered hope. They told a story voters longed to hear. And in the absence of greater, more unifying narratives, then true or not, voters plumped for the best story available. Once upon a time our society was rich in stories. They brought us together and helped us to understand the world and ourselves. We called them myths. Today, we have a myth gap - a vacuum that Alex Evans argues powerfully and persuasively is both dangerous and an opportunity. In this time of global crisis and transition- mass migration, inequality, resource scarcity, and climate change - It is stories, rather than facts and pie-charts, that will animate us and bring us together. It is by finding new myths, those that speak to us of renewal and restoration, that we will navigate our way to a better future. Drawing on his first-hand experience as a political adviser within British government and at the United Nations, and examining the history of climate change campaigning and recent contests such as Brexit and the US presidential election, Alex Evans explores: \*how tomorrow's activists are using narratives for change, \* how modern stories have been used and abused, \* where we might find the right myths

that will take us forward

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**a short history of myth: *Myth as Source of Knowledge in Early Western Thought*** Harald Haarmann, 2015 The perception of intellectual life in Greek antiquity by the representatives of the European Enlightenment of the 18th century favoured the establishment of the cult of reason. Myth as a potential source of knowledge was disregarded: instead, the monopoly of truth-finding through pure rationalisation was asserted. This tendency, positing, as it did, reason in opposition to myth, did a signal disservice to the realities of intellectual life among the ancient Greeks. Nevertheless, these distortions of the Enlightenment have conditioned our approach to education and have led to our privileging of reason as a mode of enquiry right up to the present day. The ancient Greek intellectuals (i.e. the pre-Socratic philosophers, the early historiographers, philosophers of the classical age) did not set myth (mythos) and reason (logos) in opposition to each other. In fact, they benefited from both as differing modes of enquiry, each in its own right and possessing its own value. Plato, in his reasoning, was much concerned with the proper use of mythical narrative. In one of his dialogues, he even coined a new term for explaining how mythical topics and motifs should be exploited as a source of knowledge. This term is mythologia, and it first occurs in Plato's *Republic* (394b). The present study aims to offer a corrective to traditional clichés and received wisdom about intellectual life in ancient Greece. The work proposes, and aims to reconstruct, a mental landscape in which myth and reason connect and vividly interact, and in which the concepts of mythos and

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