

The Power of Myth

Study Guide

Terms to Define:

1. Occidental
2. Archetype / archetypal
3. Gnostic / gnosticism
4. Monad
5. Sanctify
6. Motif
7. Anthropomorphic

Names to Know:

1. Sigmund Freud
2. James Joyce
3. Carl Jung
4. Emmanuel Kant
5. George Lucas
6. Thomas Mann
7. Pablo Picasso

Questions:

Chapter 1: Myth and the Modern World

1. Campbell says that the only way to describe a human being truly is by describing what?
2. According to Campbell, myths are clues to what?

3. Why does Campbell advise people to read myths from religions other than their own?
4. What are the two stages of marriage as Campbell describes them?
5. Campbell makes the case that things like gang violence and graffiti are the result of young people lacking what?
6. What does Campbell mean when he says that, "The themes [in myths] are timeless, and the inflection is to the culture."?
7. What do kings, queens, judges, and even the President of the United States have in common? (The answer isn't their power, but relates to the source of that power.)
8. What are the four principle details of a typical mystical journey?
9. Campbell compares leaving the streets of New York City to enter St. Patrick's Cathedral to what?
10. Campbell says that myths aren't "other people's dreams," but rather that they are:
11. At what point does a person become "mythologized"?
12. To what does Campbell compare movie theaters?
13. Campbell describes *Star Wars* as a story of humanity versus the State, which has become what?
14. Moyers recalls a story about a jungle tribesman talking to a Christian missionary. The tribesman says, "Your god keeps himself shut up in a house as if he were old and infirm. Ours is in the forest and in the field and on the mountains when the rain comes." Campbell describes this, along with the rise of the Yahweh cult, as "a pushing through" of what against what?
15. Campbell identifies what he calls "two totally different orders of mythology" (pp. 28 - 29). What are they?
16. Campbell believes we need a new sort of myth for the modern world. What sort of myth does he say is needed?
17. What year does Campbell identify as the year of "the awakening of man's reason"?
18. What, according to Campbell, are the four functions of mythology?
19. On page 41, Campbell identifies two subjects with which all myths deal. What are they?

Chapter 2: The Journey Inward

20. Campbell describes the mythic image of the conflict between the eagle and the serpent. To what does he compare this battle?
21. What image represents the amalgamation of these conflicting creatures?
22. One theme Campbell identifies in myth relates to what might be called "the dark night of the soul." Campbell explains that myths teach that "at the bottom of the abyss comes" what?
23. What does Campbell identify as the two levels of dreams?
24. What is "the hero's deed"?
25. What is the "deeper meaning" of the "dreamtime"?
26. Campbell says that one of the main problems of myth is reconciling "this brutal precondition of all life" -- which is what?
27. Along the lines of question 26, what does the snake frequently represent in myth?
28. Campbell describes the eating of the apple in the Garden of Eden (and similar myths about the beginning of time) as the beginning or recognition of what? (Refer to p. 55)
29. Campbell discusses a common motif in folk tales and religion, which he relates to such diverse stories as the Biblical fall of man and the story "Bluebeard." What does he call that motif?
30. What, according to Campbell, is the difference between Jung's concept of an archetypal unconscious and Freud's notion of the unconscious?
31. How can we tell, according to Campbell, that myths are not simply entertainment stories?
32. When Moyers asks if some myths are more or less true than others, what is Campbell's reply?
33. What does Campbell identify as the difference between folktales and myths?
34. Campbell says that myths are "intimately bound to the culture, time, and place" that creates them, and therefore easily die. What does he identify as the thing which can keep mythic symbols and metaphors alive?

35. Who, according to Campbell, speaks in metaphors for today's society?
36. To go "beyond all concepts" -- beyond time and space, being and non-being, etc., is to do what?
37. Campbell describes ritual as a group participation in "the most hideous act." What is "the most hideous act"?

Chapter 3: The First Storytellers

38. Early in the chapter, Campbell describes two seemingly contradictory aims that myths must serve. What are they?
39. Campbell says that, "The earliest evidence of anything like mythological thinking is associated with" what?
40. What does Campbell identify as the basic theme of all mythology?
41. Campbell describes hunting and eating as a ritual act in which the hunter identifies with the hunted animal. What common ritual is a survival of this identification?
42. What purpose do these hunting rituals serve?
43. In the story Campbell tells of the samurai sent to avenge his master's death, why does the samurai refuse to kill the murderer when the murderer spits in his face?
44. Why do American Indians refer to the buffalo as "thou" rather than "it"?
45. What purpose do mythic re-enactments (along with circumcision and subincision of aboriginal boys) serve?
46. What modern equivalents of tribal initiation for boys does Campbell describe?
47. Who does Campbell identify as the ancient equivalent of today's poets and artists?
48. How does Black Elk's "possession" story differ from typical Biblical tales of possession?
49. What significant revelation does Black Elk have while in his trance state?

Chapter 4: Sacrifice and Bliss

50. Campbell describes the arrangement of a Navajo hogan (door facing east, central fire pit, etc.) as an example of what fundamental function of mythology?

51. What is an example of a "sacred space" and what purpose does it serve?
52. According to Campbell, how can you tell what is informing (significant to) a society?
53. What does Campbell see as the distinction between shamans and priests?
54. Moyers says a people's geography "shapes their image of divinity. . ." What examples does Campbell provide to illustrate this notion? (Recall the story he relates of the pygmy who leaves the jungle for the first time in his life.)
55. What gender-related distinction does Campbell draw between society and nature?
56. What agriculture-related motif "occurs all over the place, but particularly in the Pacific cultures"?
57. Campbell says that "the aim of many a religion" is getting back into what?
58. What, according to Schopenhauer, allows a person (such as the Hawaiian police officer in Campbell's story) to risk or even give his life for another person, even a complete stranger?
59. Campbell explains that the labyrinth, while it often blocks or leads people astray, is also often the way to what?
60. Campbell describes poets as people who have made a profession and lifestyle of what?

Chapter 5: The Hero's Adventure

61. Campbell describes a hero as "someone who has given his or her life to" what?
62. What, according to Campbell, are the two types of heroic deed?
63. The "basic motif of the universal hero's journey" is what?
64. One universal mythic theme Campbell identifies is the theft of what?
65. When describing the "vision-quest myth," Campbell tells us that the hero "leaves his familiar world and goes into a depth or a distance or a height, where he encounters whatever was missing in his consciousness in the world he formerly inhabited." The hero is then faced with a choice, which is what?
66. What are the two kinds of heroes (in terms of how they begin their journey)?

67. Campbell explains that the hero gets the adventure he is ready for, and goes on to say that "the adventure is a symbolic representation" of what?

68. What is the meaning of the fairy tale motif of the hero who brings gold out of the forest only to have it turn to ashes?

69. The early hero who goes about killing monsters represents what?

70. What are the three major elements of the Hero's Journey (described in the book in terms of the story of Moses and the 10 Commandments)?

71. In discussing *Star Wars*, Campbell and Moyers mention the scene in which Obi Wan Kenobi gives Luke his father's light saber. Campbell explains that this is a common mythic motif, and that the old guru not only gives the hero a magic or sacred object, but also what?

72. Campbell says that, "Ultimately, the last deed [of the hero] must be done" how?

73. Campbell compares the dragon of western mythology to what?

74. What is the Ariande thread?

75. What number seems to present itself again and again in myths and fairy tales -- from the temptations of Christ and Buddha to the number of nights Gawain spends with the mysterious hunter?

76. What is the literal meaning of the word "compassion"?

77. Campbell finally describes the adventure of the hero as "the adventure of being" what?

Chapter 7: The Gift of the Goddess

78. A common theme in mythology has male heroes going in search of what?

79. Why are goddess figures so commonly associated with agricultural societies?

80. Campbell says that the goddess came back in the 12th and 13th centuries with what tradition?

81. Campbell explains that the death and resurrection of gods is associated with what natural phenomenon?

82. What does Campbell describe as being "an enactment of myth"?

Chapter 8: Tales of Love and Marriage

83. Who were the troubadours?
84. How is Amor different from Eros and Agape?
85. What do Lancelot and Guinevere, Tristan and Isolde, Paolo and Francesca, and Romeo and Juliet all have in common?
86. What are the Five Virtues of a medieval knight?
87. What does Campbell mean when he says the troubadours celebrated "the wounds that can only be healed by the weapon that delivered the wound"?
88. At the conclusion of the chapter, Campbell describes love as being what?

Chapter 9: Masks of Eternity

89. What distinction does Campbell draw between Western ways of thinking about God and Eastern and primal ways of thinking of gods?
90. What is the meaning of the root word of religion, *religio*?
91. According to Jung, what is one of the most powerful, primordial images of mankind, and why?
92. Edshu -- like Coyote, Puck, Loki, Inari, and others -- is an example of what kind of god or spirit?
93. What is the role of such gods and spirits?
94. How does Campbell define the term "monster"?
95. What does the sound "AUM" (also sometimes "Om") represent?

Don't panic if you're having a hard time understanding some of the reading! That's what we have classes for. Many of the concepts in this book will become clear as we read through the year's literature.