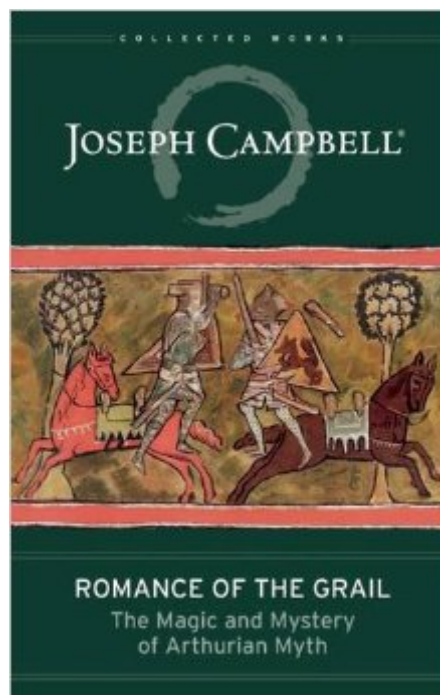


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Romance Of The Grail: The Magic And Mystery Of Arthurian Myth (The Collected Works Of Joseph Campbell)



Synopsis

The first collection of Joseph Campbell's writings and lectures on the Arthurian romances of the Middle Ages, a central focus of his celebrated scholarship, edited and introduced by Arthurian scholar Evans Lansing Smith, PhD, the chair of Mythological Studies at Pacifica Graduate Institute. Throughout his life, Joseph Campbell was deeply engaged in the study of the Grail Quests and Arthurian legends of the European Middle Ages. In this new volume of the Collected Works of Joseph Campbell, editor Evans Lansing Smith collects Campbell's writings and lectures on Arthurian legends, including his never-before-published master's thesis on Arthurian myth, "A Study of the Dolorous Stroke." Campbell's writing captures the incredible stories of such figures as Merlin, Gawain, and Guinevere as well as the larger patterns and meanings revealed in these myths. Merlin's death and Arthur receiving Excalibur from the Lady of the Lake, for example, are not just vibrant stories but also central to the mythologist's thinking. The Arthurian myths opened the world of comparative mythology to Campbell, turning his attention to the Near and Far Eastern roots of myth. Calling the Arthurian romances the world's first "secular mythology," Campbell found metaphors in them for human stages of growth, development, and psychology. The myths exemplify the kind of love Campbell called amor, in which individuals become more fully themselves through connection. Campbell's infectious delight in his discoveries makes this volume essential for anyone intrigued by the stories we tell and the stories behind them.

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Customer Reviews

Even devotees of Campbell's work are obliged to ask themselves whether another posthumous work, however well-edited, should be put forth. After all, Campbell did not, akin to his early mentor Heinrich Zimmer, for example, die young and before he had the opportunity to publish his best work. That is to say, we have *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and *The Masks of God*; we have his collections of essays, *The Mythic Image*, *The Inner Workings of Outer Space* and *Myths to Live By*; we even have the uncompleted, posthumous *Historical Atlas of World Mythology*, all works of Campbell's prose and not merely transcriptions of his lectures. Yes, Campbell could be a spell-binding lecturer - the Mythos video series is proof of that (I recommend the lecture on Parzival, "The Path of the Heart" as a tour de force example) and of course Campbell is most well-known perhaps, in the end, for his Moyers interviews. But it's his prose that I find the most lastingly rewarding.

What did I like about *Romance of the Grail*? Specifically, the "Editor's Foreward." Evans Lansing Smith is an Arthurian scholar himself and someone whom, as he tells us, at the age of twenty-six encountered Campbell for the first time "one early September autumn afternoon in 1976..., sitting on a bus beside Joseph Campbell, hearing him tell the story of climbing the belfry at Chartres Cathedral to ring the bells when he was twenty-six years old and identifying every single biblical figure in the stained glass and sculpture of that great church" (ix). Such priceless anecdotal imagery sets an intimate editorial tone and helps make *Romance* a worthy experience despite its flaws.

What are the flaws? First, it suffers from redundant treatment of themes and images - something more and more prevalent with each posthumous release. Also, the book's sometimes forced and difficult attempt at blending otherwise insoluble examples of Campbell's breezy, waggish re-tellings and densely tedious scholarship render it less compelling than, say, the more elegantly edited *Myths of Light* and *Pathways to Bliss*, to say nothing of the fascinating *Asian Journals* (which of course are in Campbell's own hand versus voice). I would've liked to have been provided with translations, in the text and the end notes for Campbell's French. And Campbell's graduate thesis, *A Study of the Dolorous Stroke* is interesting mostly for its record of displaying, in nascent form, what would later become Campbell's ultimately arresting talents in scholarship and prose.

In the end, *Romance* displays the challenge presented to the Joseph Campbell Foundation (JCF) as they mine Campbell's archives and library - that is, the challenge of producing compelling publications that don't detract from Campbell's formidable legacy. If Campbell had another indispensable book in him on the subject of Goddesses

or Arthurian Legend, for example, I'm convinced he would have written it - he was, after all, an accomplished professional editor himself. Regarding his vast files of notes, I read somewhere where he said that he at some point no longer found those notes to be something he needed to access - he didn't find it necessary to look at them anymore. Should we take his word for it and allow his archives to remain museum pieces? Or should we attempt to activate and enliven them through continued publishing? I think the flecks of gold are there. I've been to the OPUS archives in California myself, and I spent a long day mining several deep "boxes" of those notes on behalf of my own Campbell scholarship. In fact, as it happens, I'm pretty sure I even met Evans Lansing Smith during my visit, in an office that housed Campbell's own desk. I didn't know what he was working on at the time and I didn't ask. As such, I'm perhaps guilty, akin to Parzival, of not asking the required question - namely, "What ails you?" (Professor Smith wouldn't know me from Adam but I trust he'll recognize the lightheartedness here - I read somewhere that writing a book is akin to enduring a long illness). In that spirit - that of the Campbell scholar - I'm therefore providing Romance of the Grail 4-stars, not because I think it's essential but because "I like it." Otherwise, I'd direct anyone beginning their reading of Campbell to the aforementioned Campbell-authored originals because it's those writings that ring and ring with the potency of the man's talent. But I must admit that I myself began with Pathways to Bliss (and read it five times and counting). The key, I suppose, is beginning; that is to say, read Campbell in the way that suits you and be confident in the way it comes to you. If you enter the Forest Adventurous with Romance of the Grail, so be it. If in the end you'll be better served by The Masks of God Volume 4: Creative Mythology, as I think perhaps you will, it's not as important as the task of simply getting on your way to begin with. We are, after all, meant to enter the forest at a point of our own choosing.

This volume has been long anticipated. Campbell's foundational scholarship was on the grail stories. Much of this material has been previously unavailable. These chapters are rare gems that provide personal illumination for the reader. In the spirit of full disclosure, I need to mention that the editor, Evans Lansing Smith, is a friend. He studied with Campbell, and traveled to many of the grail sites with the master mythologist. Now, thanks to many years of careful scholarship by professor Smith, we have this fine collection.

Joseph Campbell lives again in his collected works. jcf.org keeps Joseph Campbell alive in our thoughts with new material that supports a great world view through understanding myths. Editor

Evans Lansing Smith, Ph.D. helps make that a reality. I was overjoyed to find this book. And am not finished yet. But I can tell you that there is a lot more to the book than the title implies. After reading the book cover to cover go back to Appendix B; it alone can lead you to a lifetime of reading. What I like about Campbell is he is so pragmatic and makes following your bliss living fun. You could call it applied mythology. I hope this is not the last book.

As an avid reader of anything "King Arthur," I was excited to read this collection. I found it to be a scholarly examination of Arthurian legend through the eyes of Joseph Campbell. For lay readers, it will be important to keep Campbell's theories in the proper context - consistent only with the research of his time. Since his time, much has been expanded upon, especially as it relates to the feminine. That being said, for all those passionate about Arthurian legend and the Quest for the Holy Grail, this is a worthy addition to your library.

I am a big fan of Joseph Campbell's works and this one is perfect for an English major or anyone who loves Arthurian myths. This book looks at the various versions of the myth and backs it up with history and the thoughts of the time surrounding Arthur and his Knights. It is well researched and well written and sheds light on why the myth of Arthur resonates with everyone and explains the reason the myth came to be. If you're an Arthurian lover and a fan of Joseph Campbell I highly recommend this book for you.

Evans Lansing Smith has compiled a collection of Joseph Campbell's perspectives on the Arthurian mythos that offers insight into the multifaceted richness of these tales. Working with both published and unpublished materials, the editor has showcased both Campbell's legendary facility with world myth and his ability to breathe life into a story. Romance of the Grail not only provides a window into the time and place that gave birth to these enduring tales, but how they are relevant reflections for our own journey of spiritual evolution. This book deserves a place on your bookshelf.

Joseph Campbell has an anecdotal clarity about his writing which pulls you in. It is essentially an analysis and interpretation of the Grail stories that falls into historical, anthropological, and mythical arenas. Be prepared to have wild dreams. This is also a fabulous compliment to "Hero with a Thousand Faces". If you love Jung or Campbell, you will really like this book.

A wonderful introduction to the Arthurian romances. Reading this in conjunction with his Mythos talks on the topic will give you a big picture idea of the topic. One thing that struck me about the book is the ease of reading. It flows very well. If you're reading this then you've come far enough and should buy the book! Shipped and arrived on time.

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