

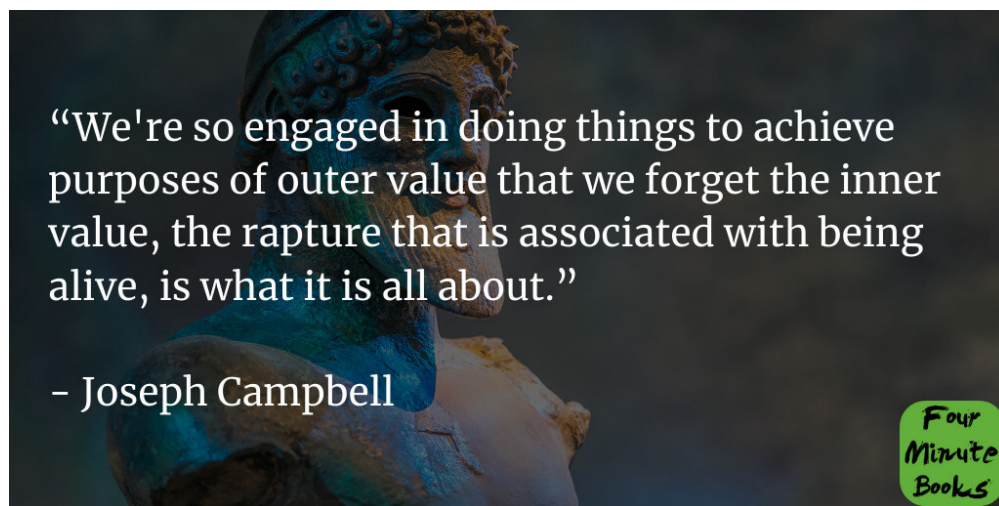
# The Power Of Myth Summary

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**1-Sentence-Summary:** *The Power Of Myth* is a book based on Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyer's popular 1988 documentary of the same name and explains where myths come from, why they are so common in society, how they've evolved, and what their important role even today in our ever-changing world.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



In ancient times, before people had science, people had to use myths to make sense of the world around them. For example, the Ancient Greeks had gods representing the sun, moon, and all of the planets. And that is how they explained the movement of celestial bodies in the sky.

You might think that myths don't have a place in today's world. We have scientific evidence to explain everything around us, right? But some might say we need myths more than we ever have. Why? Because myths help us make sense of some of the more elusive truths about life on earth, like why we're here and what happens after we die.

In *The Power of Myth: From Ancient Myths to Han Solo*, author Joseph Campbell dives into the meanings and origins of all sorts of myths. By comparing myths across cultures, he shows us that myths help us understand universal parts of life such as love and death. As the number of people practicing spirituality has begun to fall in Western cultures, Campbell explains that now more than ever we need myths to help us realize how much we have in common with those around us.

Here are 3 of the most insightful lessons from this book:

1. Myths are stories that unite people in communities, identify the beginnings of cultures, and give people a common identity.
2. As guidelines for community members, legends give a framework for people to think and act.
3. The power of myth helps us make sense of life, appreciate it, and even prepare to die.

Once upon a time, there was a book summary of The Power of Myth... let's dive right into these lessons and see what we can learn!

## **Lesson 1: Myths give people a common identity, unite people within communities, and identify the beginnings of cultures.**

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Myths play an essential part in defining and preserving a community's identity. A lot of myths do this by explaining how the beginning of life or a culture began. This helps form a group identity and makes it different from other groups.

**The religious concept some churches believe that they are the “chosen people” comes from myth.** People who believe this think that they have been chosen by God and they have the only truth. Religious myths like this foster a connection among group members and act as a boundary separating them from other belief systems.

Where do myths begin? They tend to revolve around the geographical place from where they emerge. For instance, god is different in different cultures. In some cultures such as the Incas of South America, they believe in the sun god Inti. In Native American tribes, their “first mother” usually centered around vegetation.

Myths can also change and adapt over time. For instance, when the Spanish brought horses to North America, tribes could more easily hunt buffalo. This resulted in a bigger emphasis on buffalo in their mythology.

## **Lesson 2: The legends that society passes down serve as a framework for how to think and act throughout all of life's major steps.**

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Another benefit of myths is that they give us a framework for life. They help us comprehend or handle significant life stages like birth, adulthood, and death. Myths can help us take the step from one stage to the next, even when the transition is confusing or scary.

For example, getting married is a big change in a person's life. **All cultures have marriage myths, usually including something about one person completing another spiritually.** This is where we get the metaphors of “other half” and “soul mate.” These refer to the notion that our partner fills a missing part of our soul, giving comfort during this new stage of life.

Myths can also be abstract, in which case many cultures turn to rituals as concrete ways for people to achieve what is expected of them. In Australian Aboriginal culture, boys drink blood to represent their passage as becoming a man. This is a symbol that they are leaving behind their mother's milk and they are now hunters.

In modern day, we don't lean on ritual as much. But we still do have things like them to help us understand our new roles in society. For example, there is a ritual when enlisting in an army. When new recruits arrive, they take an oath and receive a uniform. At this point, they leave personal desires behind and they are now considered not as an individual but as a member of the armed forces.

### **Lesson 3: You can make better sense of life, appreciate it more, and prepare for death all thanks to the power of myth.**

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You've probably felt afraid to die at one point or another in your life. Myths can help comfort our fears of this and grapple with our own mortality. Many myths link life and death closely. Have you ever heard a story about someone with a terminal illness who decides to live the last of their life to the fullest? It is facing death that helps them embrace the life they have left.

In Indonesian culture, some tribes believed a young man should kill a person before he could be allowed to marry and become a father. This belief came from the idea that for a new generation to emerge, the one before needed to die.

**One of the best ways myths have helped people deal with the abruptness of death is by depicting it as just moving on to another stage in life.** People in ancient cultures weren't even afraid of death because of this. To them, it was just a threshold your soul had to travel through to reach another existence.

This is the reason ancient peoples left gifts on the graves of their deceased loved ones. They believed they needed them in their new life. Through myths, people over the ages have understood and been okay with the fact that death is just a natural part of life, something that can be hard to comprehend without any beliefs.

### **The Power Of Myth Review**

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*The Power Of Myth* has got a lot of interesting ideas and ways of explaining how society works. But I'm kind of sitting here going "so what?" I guess maybe I'd rather read a book that helps me improve than something like this, but I also didn't agree with all of it so take my review with a grain of salt!

### **Who would I recommend The Power Of Myth summary to?**

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The 57-year-old humanities professor, the 22-year-old writer that's curious about how stories come to be and how they might use that in their work, and anyone who's ever wondered about the origins and intricacies of all the interesting beliefs in society.