



# World Mythology Oxford Companion

*David Leeming*

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## **World Mythology Oxford Companion** David Leeming

Cave paintings at Lascaux, France and Altamira, Spain, full of expression millennia later, point to an early human desire to form a cultural identity. The Oxford Companion to World Mythology explores the role of mythology in history & determines that the dreams of specific cultures add up to a larger collective story of humanity. Stopping short of attempting to be all-inclusive, this fascinating volume is still comprehensive, with an introduction exploring the nature & dimensions of myth & proposing a definition as a universal language. Briefly dipping into the ways our understanding of myth has changed from Aristotle & Plato to modern scholars such as Joseph Campbell, the introduction loosely places the concept in its present context & precedes articles on influential mythologists & mythological approaches that appear later in the Companion. The main body of Leeming's work consists of A-Z entries covering all aspects of mythology, including substantial essays on the world's major mythological traditions (Greek, Native American, Indian, Japanese, Sumerian, Egyptian), mythological types & motifs (Descent to the Underworld, the Hero, the Trickster, Creation, the Quest), mythological figures (Odysseus, Zeus, Osiris, Spider Woman, & Inanna) as well as numerous interrelated subjects such as fairy tales & legends. The Companion also locates myth in our lives today, relating it to language patterns, psychology, religion, politics, art, & gender attitudes. Many of the better-known & more significant myths are vividly retold in this volume that will be illustrated with maps, more than 70 black & white images, & eight pages of color highlighting the central role art has often played in the transmission & perpetuation of myth. Following the entries, a rich section of appendices will include family trees of the major pantheons, equivalency charts for the gods of Greece & Rome, Babylon & Sumer, as well as other traditions, an extensive bibliography, & an index.

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