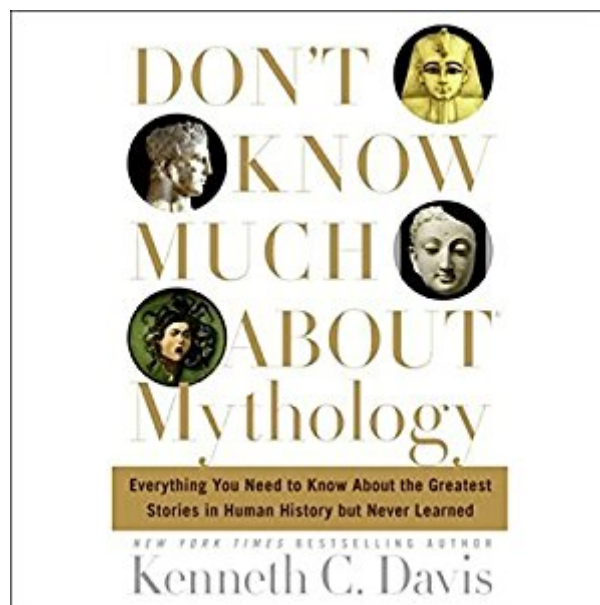




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Don't Know Much About Mythology: Everything You Need To Know About The Greatest Stories In Human History But Never Learned



Synopsis

The latest installment in the New York Times bestselling Don't Know Much About® series -- a magical journey into the timeless world of mythology. It has been fifteen years since Kenneth C. Davis first dazzled audiences with his instant classic Don't Know Much About® History, vividly bringing the past to life and proving that Americans don't hate history, they just hate the dull, textbook version they were fed in school. With humor, wit, and a knack for storytelling, Davis has been bringing readers of all ages up to speed on history, geography, and science ever since. Now, in the classic traditions of Edith Hamilton and Joseph Campbell, he turns his talents to the world of myth. Where do we come from? Why do stars shine and the seasons change? What is evil? Since the beginning of time, people have answered such questions by crafting imaginative stories that have served as religion, science, philosophy, and popular literature. In his irreverent and popular question-and-answer style, Davis introduces and explains the great myths of the world, as well as the works of literature that have made them famous. In a single volume, he tackles Mesopotamia's Gilgamesh, the first hero in world mythology; Achilles and the Trojan War; Stonehenge and the Druids; Thor, the Nordic god of thunder; Chinese oracle bones; the use of peyote in ancient Native American rites; and the dramatic life and times of the man who would be Buddha. Ever familiar and instructive, Davis shows why the ancient tales of gods and heroes -- from Mount Olympus to Machu Picchu, from ancient Rome to the icy land of the Norse -- continue to speak to us today, in our movies, art, language, and music. For mythology novices and buffs alike, and for anyone who loves a good story, Don't Know Much About® Mythology is a lively and insightful look into the greatest stories ever told. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

I loved this book! It's very interesting and the author put in a lot of effort to make the information accessible. That is, it's a very academic book but it reads like a novel. I learned a lot and want to continue reading his other books. My only criticism is that the chapters on non-Western civilizations, especially Africa and the Americas, are a lot shorter and less detailed than the others. I'm not sure if that is because of the author's bias or if these culture's mythologies are less well-documented. I was disappointed with those chapters but overall the book is an excellent read for anyone interested in history, sociology and/or religion.

An excellent overview of the subject matter. However, due to the breadth of the subject area, there is a lack of substantial detail. An excellent starting point for additional study.

This will be the 3rd time I have read this book. Gotten from the local library twice and decided I had to have my own copy. Kenneth Davis writes in a way that is easy to read and understand. His humor mingled in with world history, makes it a wonderful opportunity to learn about human nature and our beliefs, and why we need to believe. Just finished reading his book on American History little known facts and will end up reading it again also. Kenneth Davis by far is one of my favorite authors!

I haven't finished this book yet but I am about 80% into it. It has been awesome! I love mythology and the sections are just the right length to where I can read a few of them a day and not take too much time to do it. I recommend this to anyone who is into lore and mythology and would like something casual to read.

What I found perhaps the most valuable about this book was Davis' explanation of the differences between myths, legends, fables and folktales. In the Introduction and Chapter One, Davis explores the concepts of story-making and storytelling in human history, which have evolved with language and culture to help shape our worldviews today through imprinted backstories that range from the obviously fantastic to contemporary religion. Understanding these concepts can help us to understand our own actions as well as those of other cultures. Although his descriptions are brief, they do provide a good jumping-off point for further study. Beginning with Chapter Two, Davis is off to the races, providing in-depth descriptions and analysis of mythologies, from ancient Egypt to

Mesopotamia to the Greeks and Romans, and onward through the Western traditions; crossing over to India and the other Eastern traditions, and then Africa, but running out of steam, it seemed, with aboriginal-American mythology and the traditions of Polynesia, fetching up at last in just a few short pages with aboriginal Australia. The book is also bulky in places, with introductory pages in each chapter, much of which is repeated later in lists of mythological gods and personalities. This converts the book specifically into a reference as opposed to a book that can be read comfortably from cover to cover. Nevertheless the book remains a good place to chart further study, with its outline format, lengthy timelines, and historical vignettes.

I must admit, this is the kind of book that was written precisely for people like me with limited knowledge of mythology stemming from a book or two I'd read as a child, e.g. "The 12 Labors of Hercules", and a few movies I've watched, e.g. Troy, which hardly qualify as sources on the subject. After reading over 500 pages, I've gained more knowledge about the history of ancient civilizations than their myths. Thankfully, I realized that a dozen or more Gods worshipped by the Egyptians, Greeks, Mesopotamians et al. interested me less than their way of life. Kenneth Davis, through no fault of his own wrote more about these ancient civilizations and their rich cultural histories than their Gods and myths. Davis had to lay the foundation by which stories of creationism and heroes developed. Increasingly, I found myself browsing rather than reading the pages where various Gods were meticulously categorized. As far as coverage, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Greece received the lion's share, and deservedly so as compared to Chinese, Japanese, African and especially Pacific Islander civilizations. Nevertheless, Mr. Davis masterfully provides a starting point for mythically challenged people like me to explore Gods and stories of various civilizations. The main take away from this book for me was how religion and religious customs developed, and the depth to which various religions borrowed and adopted ideas to make themselves whole. While "Don't Know Much About Mythology" provides the lay person with adequate information on myths that dominated numerous cultures over time, there are undoubtedly countless other books that are better suited to tackle this subject in a more comprehensive manner.

I was disappointed because very few of the stories are recounted. Even those are mostly two sentence summaries. I could have done without his frequently equating religion, myth, & spirituality. Its best part is that it covers a broader range of cultures than anything else I know of, especially in one volume.

This book is excellent to understand myths and the multiple connections between different cultures and religions: from the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Chinese to Mexicans and Peruvians. Everything is very captivating from the first to the last page, and you will also learn lots of things that happen in our lives that are rooted in some ancient myth !

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