

# DOWNLOAD PDF ROLE OF THE MYTHIC WEST IN SOME REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLES OF CLASSIC AND MODERN AMERICAN LITERATURE

## Chapter 1 : Ancient Myths in Modern Movies

*The Role of the Mythic West in Some Representative Examples of Classic and Modern American Literature: The Shaping Force of the American Frontier (Studies in American Literature).*

Turner claimed that at the frontier American pioneers were transformed by their interaction with Native Americans and the wilderness to become rugged individuals who prized their freedom and individualism. As the frontier continued to move west it continued to transform the pioneering Americans who went there, and in turn transform the nation. Turner argued that nationalism, democracy because of increased individualism, and a rejection of European ideals were a result of the frontier. In his eyes they are the first step toward civilization, and when they arrive the boundary of the frontier moves westward. In a broad sense, the notion of the frontier was the edge of the settled country where unlimited free land was available and thus unlimited opportunity. While Turner did not create the myth of the frontier, he gave voice to it, and his frontier thesis was a major contribution to the general acceptance of the myth by scholars in the twentieth century. The focus on the West, and particularly the idealized concept of the frontier, placed those areas as foundational for American identity. Rather than looking to the Eastern city, such as Boston or Philadelphia, as the epitome of American ideals and values, the focus of American history and identity was on the farmers who were slowly but steadily moving farther west, searching for land and a modest income. The Work of Richard Slotkin[ edit ] As noted above, Richard Slotkin has devoted a career to studying the myth of the frontier, writing three impressive books on the subject, *Regeneration Through Violence*, *Fatal Environment*, and *Gunfighter Nation*. Throughout these works Slotkin defines myth as "a set of narratives that acquire through specifiable historical action a significant ideological charge. Being a frontiersman in the so-called Wild West, a cowboy, rancher or gold miner were idealized within American mystery. This transformed the cattle industry until the late s. They were now glorified as men of rough-hewn integrity and self-reliant strength. However, since the land was occupied by Native Americans the incoming colonists took the land with violence, hence the title *regeneration through violence*. It was further developed in the nineteenth century to meet the growing needs of industrialization, incorporating the exploitation of land. The myth of the frontier held promise of wealth in the undiscovered lands and thus encouraged settlement, but Slotkin argues that the myth of the frontier distorted the historical reality that the methods for attaining the wealth were developed in the city and in Europe. Slotkin illustrates that the myth of the frontier was created in the colonies through violent interactions, and was developed throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to fit the needs of a developing civilization. Bold argues that it was this collection of men that brought together the cultural themes present in the myth of the frontier to create literature *The Virginian* and art that distorted the reality of the West and turned it into a romanticized place. Bold argues the goal of the group was to sway public opinion so that they could lobby for legislation to protect hunting grounds in the West. They did this both in their creation of the formula for the myth of the frontier, and in public policy. In the regards to myth their efforts were successful, and the common myth of the frontier to follow this period features the white cowboy riding in to save the white townsfolk particularly women, usually from Native Americans or Hispanics. The western myth is far removed from the historical reality of the West. Often movies, comics and American literature neglect to show realities of the journey west, and the life on the frontier. Failing to show the brutalities of Indian warfare, racism towards Mexican-Americans and Blacks, and the boom-and-bust mentality rooted in the selfish exploitation of natural resources. In a study on the legends and folklore tales of the nineteenth century, Kent Steckmesser identified four characters that are representative of four archetype heroes, each personifying an era in the frontier: Steckmesser concludes that each of these legends contain a few set characteristics: New Western History From the s the term frontier, and the frontier myth, fell into disrepute due to its failure to include minorities based

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on race, class, gender and environment. The New Western History has focused on an examination of the problems of expansion; destruction of the environment, indigenous massacres, and the historical reality of the lives of settlers. In *Legacy of Conquest* Limerick writes, "[Frederick Jackson] Turner was, to put it mildly, ethnocentric and nationalistic. In these terms, it has distinctive features as well as features it shares with histories of other parts of the nation and the planet.

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## Chapter 2 : Frontier myth - Wikipedia

*The role of the mythic West in some representative examples of classic and modern American literature: the shaping force of the American frontier.*

The conference was in full swing, with scholars delivering knowledgeable lectures on varying subjects. The audience enjoyed it immensely. He said through peace they could achieve what not possible through war.

**Love and Friendship Theme** Love and friendship are frequently occurring themes in literature. They generate emotional twists and turns in a narrative, and can lead to a variety of endings: The following are famous literary works with love and friendship themes:

**War Theme** The theme of war has been explored in literature since ancient times. Most recent literary works portray war as a curse for humanity, due to the suffering it inflicts. Some famous examples include:

**Crime and Mystery Themes** Crime and mystery are utilized in detective novels. Some well-known crime and mystery theme examples include:

**Revenge Theme** Revenge is another recurrent theme found in many popular literary works. A character comes across certain circumstances that make him aware of his need for revenge. The outcome of his action is often bitter, but sometimes they may end up being satisfied.

**Charge for the guns! Into the valley of Death Rode the six hundred.** War is the main theme of the poem, which naturally leads to death while the theme of death is interwoven with the theme of war.

**Function of Theme** Theme is an element of a story that binds together various essential elements of a narrative. It is often a truth that exhibits universality, and stands true for people of all cultures. Through themes, a writer tries to give his readers an insight into how the world works, or how he or she views human life.

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## Chapter 3 : Theme - Examples and Definition of Theme

*Role of the Mythic West in some representative examples of Classic and Modern American Literature as the shaping force of the American Frontier Author: Bakker, J.*

Mythology[ edit ] Tricksters are archetypal characters who appear in the myths of many different cultures. Lewis Hyde describes the trickster as a "boundary-crosser". Tricksters can be cunning or foolish or both. The trickster openly questions and mocks authority. They are usually male characters, and are fond of breaking rules, boasting, and playing tricks on both humans and gods. All cultures have tales of the trickster, a crafty creature who uses cunning to get food, steal precious possessions, or simply cause mischief. In some Greek myths Hermes plays the trickster. He is the patron of thieves and the inventor of lying, a gift he passed on to Autolycus , who in turn passed it on to Odysseus. Loki cuts the hair of the goddess Sif. Frequently the trickster figure exhibits gender and form variability. In Norse mythology the mischief-maker is Loki , who is also a shape shifter. Loki also exhibits gender variability, in one case even becoming pregnant. British scholar Evan Brown suggested that Jacob in the Bible has many of the characteristics of the trickster: The tricks Jacob plays on his twin brother Esau , his father Isaac and his father-in-law Laban are immoral by conventional standards, designed to cheat other people and gain material and social advantages he is not entitled to. In West Africa and thence into the Caribbean via the slave trade , the spider Anansi is often the trickster. List of fictional tricksters The trickster or clown is an example of a Jungian archetype. In modern literature the trickster survives as a character archetype, not necessarily supernatural or divine, sometimes no more than a stock character. A cigar-puffing puppet, Froggy induced the adult humans around him to engage in ridiculous and self-destructive hi-jinks. He also is known for entertaining people as a clown does. For example, many typical fairy tales have the king who wants to find the best groom for his daughter by ordering several trials. No brave and valiant prince or knight manages to win them, until a poor and simple peasant comes. With the help of his wits and cleverness, instead of fighting, he evades or fools monsters and villains and dangers with unorthodox manners. Therefore, the most unlikely candidate passes the trials and receives the reward. More modern and obvious examples of that type include Bugs Bunny and Pippi Longstocking. Role in African American literature[ edit ] Modern African American literary criticism has turned the trickster figure into an example of how it is possible to overcome a system of oppression from within. For years, African American literature was discounted by the greater community of American literary criticism while its authors were still obligated to use the language and the rhetoric of the very system that relegated African Americans and other minorities to the ostracized position of the cultural "other. To demonstrate this process, Gates cites the interactions found in African American narrative poetry between the trickster, the Signifying Monkey , and his oppressor, the Lion. Yet the Monkey is able to outwit the Lion continually in these narratives through his usage of figurative language. Before Gates, there was some precedent for the analysis of African American folk heroes as destructive agents of an oppressive hierarchical system. In the s and s, T. Eliot and Ezra Pound engaged in an epistolary correspondence. African American literary criticism and folktales are not the only place in the American literary tradition that tricksters are to be found combating subjugation from within an oppressive system. In *When Brer Rabbit Meets Coyote*, the argument is posited that the Brer Rabbit stories were derived from a mixture of African and Native American mythology , thus attributing part of the credit for the formation of the tales and wiles of Brer Rabbit to "Indian captivity narratives" and the rabbit trickster found in Cherokee mythology. Many native traditions held clowns and tricksters as essential to any contact with the sacred. People could not pray until they had laughed, because laughter opens and frees from rigid preconception. Humans had to have tricksters within the most sacred ceremonies for fear that they forget the sacred comes through upset, reversal, surprise. The trickster in most native traditions is essential to creation, to

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birth. He can be a hero in one tale and a villain in the next. Both are usually seen as jokesters and pranksters. In Native American creation stories, when Coyote teaches humans how to catch salmon, he makes the first fish weir out of logs and branches. Coyote mythology Coyote often has the role of trickster as well as a clown in traditional stories. The Coyote mythos is one of the most popular among western Native American cultures, especially among indigenous peoples of California and the Great Basin. As the culture hero, Coyote appears in various mythic traditions, but generally with the same magical powers of transformation, resurrection, and "medicine". He is engaged in changing the ways of rivers, creating new landscapes and getting sacred things for people. Of mention is the tradition of Coyote fighting against monsters. According to Wasco tradition, Coyote was the hero to fight and kill Thunderbird, the killer of people, but he could do that not because of his personal power, but due to the help of the Spirit Chief. More often than not Coyote is a trickster, but always different. In some stories, he is a noble trickster: Some have said that a trickster is a type of online community character.

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## Chapter 4 : Short Stories and Classic Literature

*The Role of the Mythic West in Some Representative Examples of Classic and Modern American Literature: The Shaping Force of the American Frontier. Lewiston: E. Mellen Press.*

This work is rescued from the class of mere translation by its literary art and imaginative interpretation, and it possesses for us an additional interest because of its nativity amid such surroundings. Two lines telling how Philemon "Took down a flitch of bacon with a prung, That long had in the smoky chimney hung," show that his environment aided him somewhat in the translation. He himself says of this version that it was "bred in the new world, whereof it cannot but participate, especially having wars and tumults to bring it to light, instead of the muses. The only original poem which merits our attention in the early Virginian colony was found soon after the Revolutionary War in a collection of manuscripts, known as the Burwell Papers. This poem is an elegy on the death of Nathaniel Bacon, a young Virginian patriot and military hero, who resisted the despotic governor, Sir William Berkeley. An unknown friend wrote the elegy in defense of Bacon and his rebellion. These lines from that elegy show a strength unusual in colonial poetry: This is today a readable account of the colony and its people in the first part of the eighteenth century. This selection shows that in those early days Virginians were noted for what has come to be known as southern hospitality: A stranger has no more to do, but to inquire upon the road where any gentleman or good housekeeper lives, and there he may depend upon being received with hospitality. This good nature is so general among their people, that the gentry, when they go abroad, order their principal servant to entertain all visitors with everything the plantation affords. And the poor planters who have but one bed, will very often sit up, or lie upon a form or couch all night, to make room for a weary traveller to repose himself after his journey. He then wrote a History of the Dividing Line run in the Year This book is a record of personal experiences, and is as interesting as its title is forbidding. This selection describes the Dismal Swamp, through which the line ran: Doubtless the eternal shade that broods over this mighty bog and hinders the sunbeams from blessing the ground, makes it an uncomfortable habitation for anything that has life. Not so much as a Zealand frog could endure so aguish a situation. It had one beauty, however, that delighted the eye, though at the expense of all the other senses: Not even a turkey buzzard will venture to fly over it, no more than the Italian vultures will fly over the filthy lake Avernus or the birds in the Holy Land over the salt sea where Sodom and Gomorrah formerly stood. Our chaplain for his part did his office and rubbed us up with a seasonable sermon. This was quite a new thing to our brethren of North Carolina, who live in a climate where no clergyman can breathe, and when they fock, they fock hard. No critic could say that they might as well have been written in London as in Virginia. They also show how much eighteenth-century prose had improved in form. Even in England, modern prose may almost be said to begin with John Dryden, who died at the beginning of the eighteenth century. In addition to improvement in form, we may note the appearance of a new quality: In New England there were more dwellers in towns, more democracy and mingling of all classes, more popular education, and more literature. The ruling classes of Virginia were mostly descendants of the Cavaliers who had sympathized with monarchy, while the Puritans had fought the Stuart kings and had approved a Commonwealth. In Virginia a wealthy class of landed gentry came to be an increasing power in the political history of the country. The ancestors of George Washington and many others who did inestimable service to the nation were among this class. It was long the fashion for this aristocracy to send their children to England to be educated, while the Puritans trained theirs at home. New England started a printing press, and was printing books by In Sir William Berkeley, governor of Virginia, wrote, "I thank God there are no free schools, nor printing, and I hope we shall not have these hundred years; for learning has brought disobedience and heresy and sects into the world, and printing has developed them. The South was chiefly agricultural. The plantations were large, and the people lived in far

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greater isolation than in New England, where not only the town, but more especially the church, developed a close social unit. One other reason served to make it difficult for a poet of the plowman type, like Robert Burns, or for an author from the general working class, like Benjamin Franklin, to arise in the South. Labor was thought degrading, and the laborer did not find the same chance as at the North to learn from close association with the intelligent class. The reason for this is given by Colonel William Byrd, from whom we have quoted in the preceding section. He wrote in of the leading men of the South: I am sensible of many bad consequences of multiplying these Ethiopians amongst us. They blow up the pride and ruin the industry of our white people, who seeing a rank of poor creatures below them, detest work, for fear it should make them look like slaves. While a child, he attended the religious meetings of the Puritans. At the age of eighteen he gave up a good position in the post service of England, and crossed to Holland to escape religious persecution. His History of Plymouth Plantation is not a record of the Puritans as a whole, but only of that branch known as the Pilgrims, who left England for Holland in 1607, and who, after remaining there for nearly twelve years, had the initiative to be the first of their band to come to the New World, and to settle at Plymouth in 1620. For more than thirty years he was governor of the Plymouth colony, and he managed its affairs with the discretion of a Washington and the zeal of a Cromwell. His History tells the story of the Pilgrim Fathers from the time of the formation of their two congregations in England, until 1649. In the United States for the first time came into possession of the manuscript of this famous History of Plymouth Plantation, which had in some mysterious manner been taken from Boston in colonial times and had found its way into the library of the Lord Bishop of London. Few of the English seem to have read it. Even its custodian miscalled it The Log of the Mayflower, although after the ship finally cleared from England, only five incidents of the voyage are briefly mentioned: On petition, the Lord Bishop of London generously gave this manuscript of pages to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In a speech at the time of its formal reception, Senator Hoar eloquently summed up the subject matter of the volume as follows: There is nothing like it in human annals since the story of Bethlehem. Bradford says that there was immediate improvement when each family received the full returns from working its own individual plot of ground. He thus philosophizes about this social experiment of the Pilgrims: I answer, seeing all men have this corruption in them, God in his wisdom saw another course fitter for them. This Journal was to continue until a few months before his death in 1630, and was in after times to receive the dignified name of History of New England, although it might more properly still be called his Journal, as its latest editor does indeed style John Winthrop was born in the County of Suffolk, England, in 1597, the year of the defeat of the Spanish Armada. He was a wealthy, well-educated Puritan, the owner of broad estates. As he paced the deck of the Arbella, the night before he sailed for Massachusetts, he knew that he was leaving comfort, home, friends, position, all for liberty of conscience. Few men have ever voluntarily abandoned more than Winthrop, or clung more tenaciously to their ideals. After a voyage lasting more than two months, he settled with a large number of Puritans on the site of modern Boston. For the principal part of the time from his arrival in 1630 until his death in 1649, he served as governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Not many civil leaders of any age have shown more sagacity, patriotism, and tireless devotion to duty than John Winthrop. His Journal is a record of contemporaneous events from 1630 to 1649. The early part of this work might with some justice have been called the Log of the Arbella. Peter Milborne was master, being manned with 52 seamen, and 28 pieces of ordnance, the wind coming to the N. Cradock, the late governor, and the masters of his 2 ships, Capt. Thomas Beecher, master of the Talbot. In the afternoon less wind, and our people began to grow well again. Our children and others, that were sick and lay groaning in the cabins, we fetched out, and having stretched a rope from the steerage to the main-mast, we made them stand, some of one side and some of the other, and sway it up and down till they were warm, and by this means they soon grew well and merry. Being found out, they were ordered by the governors of the college to be there whipped, which was performed by the president himself--yet they were about twenty years of age; and after they were brought into the court and

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ordered to twofold satisfaction, or to serve so long for it. We had yet no particular punishment for burglary. He had taken to apprentice one Nathaniel Sewell, one of those children sent over the last year for the country; the boy had the scurvy and was withal very noisome, and otherwise ill disposed. His master used him with continual rigour and unmerciful correction, and exposed him many times to much cold and wet in the winter season, and used divers acts of rigour towards him, as hanging him in the chimney, etc. The most noticeable qualities of this terrible story are its simplicity, its repression, its lack of striving after effect. Winthrop, Bradford, and Bunyan had learned from the version of the Bible to be content to present any situation as simply as possible and to rely on the facts themselves to secure the effect. He defines liberty as the power "to do that which is good, just, and honest. This liberty you are to stand for, with the hazard, not only of your goods, but of your lives, if need be. Thus, he tells about storms, fires, peculiar deaths of animals, crimes, trials, Indians, labor troubles, arrival of ships, trading expeditions, troubles with England about the charter, politics, church matters, events that would point a moral, like the selfish refusal of the authorities to loan a quantity of gunpowder to the Plymouth colony and the subsequent destruction of that same powder by an explosion, or the drowning of a child in the well while the parents were visiting on Sunday. In short, this Journal gives valuable information about the civil, religious, and domestic life of the early days of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The wonder is that he told the story of this colony in such good form and that he still holds the interest of the reader so well. We must not forget that the Puritans came to America to secure a higher form of spiritual life. In the reign of Elizabeth, it was thought that the Revival of Learning would cure all ills and unlock the gates of happiness. This hope had met with disappointment. Then Puritanism came, and ushered in a new era of spiritual aspiration for something better, nobler, and more satisfying than mere intellectual attainments or wealth or earthly power had been able to secure. The Puritans chose the Bible as the guidebook to their Promised Land. The long sermons to which they listened were chiefly biblical expositions. The Puritans considered the saving of the soul the most important matter, and they neglected whatever form of culture did not directly tend toward that result. Even beauty and art were considered handmaids of the Evil One. The Bible was read, reread, and constantly studied, and it took the place of secular poetry and prose. In the New England Primer, the children were taught the first article of belief, as they learned the letter A: Thomas Shephard " , one of the great Puritan clergy, fixed the mathematical ratio of the damned to the elect as "a thousand to one. The "fittest" are the "elect"; those who perish in the contest, the "damned. In spite of the apparent contradiction between free will and foreordination, each individual felt himself fully responsible for the saving of his soul. A firm belief in this tremendous responsibility made each one rise the stronger to meet the other responsibilities of life. Civil responsibility seemed easier to one reared in this school. Although there were probably as many university men in proportion to the population in early colonial Massachusetts as in England, the strength and direction of their religious ideals helped to turn their energy into activities outside the field of pure literature. In course of time, however, Nathaniel Hawthorne appeared to give lasting literary expression to this life. They were men of energy and ability, who could lead their congregations to Holland or to the wilds of New England. For the purpose in hand the world has never seen superior leaders. Many of them were graduates of Cambridge University, England.

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## Chapter 5 : Native American literature | calendrierdelascience.com

*During the last three decades of legal slavery in America, from the early s to the end of the Civil War in , African American writers perfected one of the nation's first truly indigenous genres of written literature: the North American slave narrative.*

Mythology is the study of myth. The term myth has come to refer to a certain genre or category of stories that share characteristics that make this genre distinctly different from other genres of oral narratives , such as legends and folktales. Many definitions of myth repeat similar general aspects of the genre and may be summarized thus: Myths are symbolic tales of the distant past often primordial times that concern cosmogony and cosmology the origin and nature of the universe , may be connected to belief systems or rituals, and may serve to direct social action and values. For many people, myths remain value-laden discourse that explain much about human nature. There are a number of general conceptual frameworks involved in definitions of myth, including these: Myths are Cosmogonic Narratives, connected with the Foundation or Origin of the Universe and key beings within that universe , though often specifically in terms of a particular culture or region. Given the connection to origins, the setting is typically primordial the beginning of time and characters are proto-human or deific. Myths also often have cosmogonic overtones even when not fully cosmogonic, for instance dealing with origins of important elements of the culture food, medicine, ceremonies, etc. Myths are Narratives of a Sacred Nature, often connected with some Ritual. Myths are often foundational or key narratives associated with religions. These narratives are believed to be true from within the associated faith system though sometimes that truth is understood to be metaphorical rather than literal. Within any given culture there may be sacred and secular myths coexisting. For example, structuralism recognizes paired bundles of opposites or dualities -- like light and dark as central to myths. Mythic Narratives often Involve Heroic Characters possibly proto-humans, super humans, or gods who mediate inherent, troubling dualities, reconcile us to our realities, or establish the patterns for life as we know it. Myths are Narratives that are "Counter-Factual in featuring actors and actions that confound the conventions of routine experience" McDowell, They are often highly valued or disputed stories that still intrigue us even though many of us do not recognize them as a living genre in our culture. Myths also seem in opposition to science because they are not testable, which is the case at least for origin myths because of their primordial setting -- if events described are from a different, earlier world, then of course they would not be repeatable or logical in our world. Both myths and science offer explanations of the cosmos. A key difference is that information about the universe presented in myths is not testable, whereas science is designed to be tested repeatedly. Science also depends on cumulative, frequently updated knowledge, whereas myth is based on passed down stories and beliefs. Myths may change over time, particularly after contact with other cultures, but they do not change and adapt to new periods and technological developments in the same way science does. Myths may be enacted through rituals and believed in absolutely, but they usually do not have physical effects in the real world, as in leading to new technology for building cars or providing medical treatment. People may believe they are cured through faith, and they may find important value-laden sentiments in myths, but these "real world results" are neither empirical nor usually repeatable two standard criteria for science. Although science differs from myth in offering actual, testable control over the environment and producing real, repeatable results in the world, science is NOT completely divorced from myth. Many scientific theories are presented or understood in narrative form, which often end up sounding remarkably mythic, as scholars like Stephen Jay Gould and Gregory Schremp have discussed see scholarship as myth section below. Myths were considered by Victorian scholars as survivals of previous times perhaps decayed or reflective of "primitive" ancestors who took them literally. Some saw them as evidence for social evolutionary theories of the 19th century. These

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Victorian scholars like E. Tylor believed that humans in all cultures progress through stages of evolution from "savagery" to "barbarism" and finally to "civilization. Such theories no longer seem reasonable. We have not, for instance, progressed beyond brutality, murder, war, and grave injustices just because we have more advanced technology in fact we use our technology partly to more efficiently kill other humans. We also recognize the complexity, thoughtfulness, and beauty of many other cultures we may once have considered inferior to our own. Based on over a century of ethnology anthropological fieldwork and research in psychology, genetics, and other disciplines, scholars now accept that humans from all eras and parts of the world have equal intellectual capacity and potential. We understand as well today that our own theories may seem as foolish to our descendants as their conceptions of the universe sometimes seem to us see scholarship as myth section below. Our ancestors understood metaphor as well as we. This does not mean our ancestors lived exactly as we do, or that we conceive of the world in identical ways. But myths serve us better as means of understanding our ancestors if we accept their capacity for complex intellectual and artistic expression. Theories allow us to do our work as scholars, though our best efforts come with self-awareness of the theories and methods we employ as scholars. We now understand and discuss traditional myths and other such texts as emergent and intricately connected to performance situations or context. The more we can understand of the context of a myth, the culture it came from, the individual who told it, when and for what purpose, the audience who received it, etc. Of course, the further back in time one goes, the harder it becomes to study context. Myths, as explanations of the cosmos and how to live, are parallel to science in many ways. Yet because of their differences from science, they often appear insignificant, whimsical, useless, or primitive to contemporary people. Many people lament the decline of myths, because they promise moral guidance and comfort that helps enrich life. For these reasons, many people remain interested in myths and seek to revive or revere them. Some people believe classical music, movies, and even novels have filled the places myths used to occupy culturally. In our post-modern world many people believe myths exist in new, combined, or revived forms. One of the functions of all art is to reconcile us to paradox. Another is to suggest fundamental patterns of life and the universe. Even if they are no longer associated with religious rituals, belief systems, or primordial moments of creation, "myths" of heroic characters who mediate the troubling paradoxes of life will always compel us and can, I believe, still be found in our culture. Characteristics of Myths Given the cautions above about how much the definition of myth has been debated and written about, take the following characteristics of myth in the spirit in which they are intended: Remember these characteristics are neither absolute nor all-encompassing. A story that is or was considered a true explanation of the natural world and how it came to be. Characters are often non-human e. Setting is a previous proto-world somewhat like this one but also different. Plot may involve interplay between worlds this world and previous or original world. Depicts events that bend or break natural laws reflective of connection to previous world. Reflective and formative of basic structures dualities: Dualities often mediated by characters in myths. Myths are distinguished from other commonly collected narratives such as folktales and legends. Myths were defined as stories of ancient times believed to be true. Malinowski added that they must be sacred, and discussed how they serve society as a charter for action. Many great social theorists from the 19th and early 20th centuries Freud, Frazer, Muller, Jung, etc. More recent scholars, like William Hansen, argue that the sacred element of myths is a recent attachment to definitions perhaps beginning with the Grimms and then solidified by Malinowski. They were not necessarily connected to religious beliefs, but were often secular stories. While myths do not have to have a sacred element, they DO appear to share a world-forming, or worldview-forming function. Generic Fluidity The fact that scholars discuss various possible definitions of myth demonstrates the vitality and importance of this genre. Genres are categorizations imposed by scholars seeking ways of classifying and analyzing material they study. As folklorist Richard Bauman explains of all genres of stories, they share certain characteristics of: Genres are extremely useful, but all good scholars realize that they are

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fluid and often messy guides, rather than absolute, neat, and fixed realities. Realizing the fluidity of narrative forms stretches throughout the history of folklore scholarship and into the present day. Contemporary performance theorist Richard Bauman writes: From the perspective of performance theory, distinctions between generic forms and their meaning and function should remain fluid, dynamic, to be discovered. In a sense, they create their own myths, even while they think they are rising above it. Myths seem to offer us symbolic resources we need to communicate. Although the prevalence of mythological details in our discourse keys us to its importance, we typically insist upon distinguishing ways of thinking about the world, and today we think of myth as lesser than science. Yet the persistence of myths throughout our culture reveals their worth. Early scholars in myth theory created myths to paint pictures of early human life and conceptions of the universe. Discussions of myth became myths' origin stories that influence how we understand people and the world, i. Functionalism

Branislaw Malinowski is considered a functionalist because he insisted that myths serve as charters for social action. Many other myth scholars also discuss this aspect of myths. Anthropologist and folklorist Paul Radin considers myth distinctive because of its function and implications as determined by certain individual society members. The myth-makers then explain symbolically how to live, as Radin notes: The explanatory theme often is so completely dominant that everything else becomes subordinated to it. Myths serve to explain and encourage worldview and good action within society. Many other theorists of myth concur that it has a functional dimension. Antinomy or contradiction is often evident in the form of dualities such as good and bad, night and day, etc. Looked at as whole structures, myths reveal a typical pattern: The symbolic mediation in myths offers inspiration for culture and culture members to heal, flourish, or accept their reality. He also draws upon sewing imagery in discussing the function and method of the bricoleur: More rapid cross-references, together with an increase in the number of points of view and angles of approach have made it possible to consolidate into a whole what might at first have seemed to be a loose and precarious assemblage of odds and ends, all dissimilar in form, texture and color. Careful stitching and darning, systematically applied to reinforce weak spots, has finally produced a homogeneous fabric, clear in outline and harmonious in its blend of shades; fragments which at first seemed disparate, once they found their appropriate place and the correct relationship to their neighbors, come together to form a coherent picture. In this picture, the tiniest details, however gratuitous, bizarre, and even absurd they may have seemed at the beginning, acquire both meaning and function. Twin myths are very common and popular throughout the American Indian world. You can find traditional twin myths in virtually any collection of Native American myths. Her contemporary myth offers symbolism direction for contemporary Native Americans whose culture is currently experiencing a re-birth or renewal of culture. Erdrich highlights this twin myth theme in her opening image of primordial female twins sewing the pattern of the world in beads. Like bricoleurs, spinners, and spiders, they affirm that mixing cultures, like mixing patterns in other creative endeavors, need not be a source of concern, but is instead is the source of life itself.

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## Chapter 6 : Nature and the American Identity

*Role in African American literature Modern African American literary criticism has turned the trickster figure into an example of how it is possible to overcome a system of oppression from within.*

Followed closely by the advent of World War I, these social shifts, which had been set in motion at the beginning of the century, developed further as women were propelled into the workforce, exposing them to previously male-dominated professional and political situations. The end of the nineteenth century saw tremendous growth in the suffrage movement in England and the United States, with women struggling to attain political equality. The suffragists—who were often militant in their expressions of protest—presented a sometimes stark contrast to the feminine ideal of the era, which portrayed women as delicate, demure, and silent, confined to a domestic world that cocooned them from the harsh realities of the world. As men were called to war, companies that had previously limited employment in better-paying jobs to white males found themselves opening their doors to white women and women and men of color. As well as functioning in the workforce, women actively participated in the political and cultural life of England and the United States. The early decades of the twentieth century, often referred to as the Progressive Era, saw the emergence of a new image of women in society which had undergone a marked transformation from the demure, frail, female stereotype of the late Victorian Era. The women of the Progressive Era, according to Sarah Jane Deutsch, were portrayed as "women with short hair and short skirts — kicking up their legs and kicking off a century of social restrictions. However, Deutsch asserts that this image of the s "flapper" was restricted to certain portions of the population, namely white, young, and middle-class communities. Women elsewhere, particularly women from other ethnic backgrounds, such as African-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Hispanics, lived much differently, struggling in their new roles as mothers and professionals. The number of women who worked outside the home in the s rose almost 50 percent throughout the decade. While women still constituted a small number of the professional population, they were slowly increasing their participation in more significant occupations, including law, social work, engineering, and medicine. The presence of a large class of young working women after World War I was reflected in what had become a major cultural force—the film industry. While early cinematic storylines often featured poor women finding success and contentment through marriage to rich men, the films of the s depicted young, feisty working women who, like their predecessors, could attain true happiness only by marrying their bosses. Such plotlines helped many to cope with the growing fear that the domestic and family structure of society was being eroded by the emergence of the new, independent woman. Rarely did depictions of women in mass media, including film, radio, and theater, convey the true circumstances of working women. Instead, audiences were presented with images of flappers or visions of glorified motherhood and marriage. Women in the early twentieth century were perhaps most active and influential as writers and artists. Male authors such as D. Howells explored issues pertaining to sexuality and the newly redefined sexual politics between men and women. Women authors such as Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair, and Katherine Mansfield focused on topics pertinent to women, bringing attention to the myriad difficulties they faced redefining their identities in a changing world. In the arena of art, the early twentieth century provided growing opportunities for women to exhibit their work. In , for example, the National Academy of Design first allowed women to attend anatomy lectures, thus providing them with a chance to study draftsmanship and develop drawing skills in a formal setting. Many female artists—among them Dorothea Lange and Claire Leighton—used their talents to highlight the social realities of their times, and some of the most powerful images of this period, including stirring portrayals of coal miners and farmers, were produced by these women. By the mid-twentieth century, women throughout the Western world had completely redefined their roles in almost every social, political, and cultural sphere.

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While the fight for equal rights and recognition for women would continue into the s and beyond, the first major steps towards such changes began at the advent of the twentieth century, with women writers, photographers, artists, activists, and workers blazing a new trail for generations of women to follow.

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## Chapter 7 : American Literature/Colonial Period (s) - Wikibooks, open books for an open world

*Modernist literature was a predominantly English genre of fiction writing, popular from roughly the 1890s into the 1950s. Modernist literature came into its own.*

See Article History Alternative Titles: American Indian literature, Indian literature Native American literature, also called Indian literature or American Indian literature, the traditional oral and written literatures of the indigenous peoples of the Americas. These include ancient hieroglyphic and pictographic writings of Middle America as well as an extensive set of folktales, myths, and oral histories that were transmitted for centuries by storytellers and that live on in the language works of many contemporary American Indian writers. For a further discussion of the literature of the Americas produced in the period after European contact, see Latin American literature ; American literature ; Canadian literature ; Caribbean literature. General characteristics Folktales have been a part of the social and cultural life of American Indian and Eskimo peoples regardless of whether they were sedentary agriculturists or nomadic hunters. As they gathered around a fire at night, Native Americans could be transported to another world through the talent of a good storyteller. The effect was derived not only from the novelty of the tale itself but also from the imaginative skill of the narrator, who often added gestures and songs and occasionally adapted a particular tale to suit a certain culture. One adaptation frequently used by the storyteller was the repetition of incidents. The description of an incident would be repeated a specific number of times. The number of repetitions usually corresponded to the number associated with the sacred by the culture; whereas in Christian traditions, for instance, the sacred is most often counted in threes for the Trinity, in Native American traditions the sacred is most often associated with groups of four representing the cardinal directions and the deities associated with each or seven the cardinal directions and deities plus those of skyward, earthward, and centre. The hero would kill that number of monsters or that many brothers who had gone out on the same adventure. This type of repetition was very effective in oral communication, for it firmly inculcated the incident in the minds of the listeners—much in the same manner that repetition is used today in advertising. In addition, there was an aesthetic value to the rhythm gained from repetition and an even greater dramatic effect, for the listener knew that, when the right number of incidents had been told, some supernatural character would come to the aid of the hero, sometimes by singing to him. For this reason, oral literature is often difficult and boring to read. Oral literature also loses effect in transcription, because the reader, unlike the listener, is often unacquainted with the worldview, ethics, sociocultural setting, and personality traits of the people in whose culture the story was told and set. Because the effect of the story depended so much on the narrator, there were many versions of every good tale. Each time a story was told, it varied only within the limits of the tradition established for that plot and according to the cultural background of the narrator and the listeners. While studies have been made of different versions of a tale occurring within a tribe, there is still much to be discovered, for instance, in the telling of the same tale by the same narrator under different circumstances. These gaps in the study of folktales indicate not a lack of interest but rather the difficulty in setting up suitable situations for recordings. The terms myth and folktale in American Indian oral literature are used interchangeably, because in the Native American view the difference between the two is a matter of time rather than content. American Indian mythology can be divided into three major cultural regions: North American cultures from the Eskimos to the Indians along the Mexican border, Central and South American urban cultures, and Caribbean and South American hunting-and-gathering and farming cultures. Though each region exhibits a wide range of development, there are recurrent themes among the cultures, and within each culture the importance of mythology itself varies. In North America, for example, each tale can usually stand alone, although many stories share a cast of characters; in contrast, stories developed in the urban cultures of Central America and South America resemble the complicated mythologies

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of ancient Greece and are quite confusing with their many sexual liaisons, hybrid monsters, and giants. These mythologies are related to the concept that all animals have souls or spirits that give them supernatural power. Because humans have subsequently been differentiated from the animals, the animals appear in visions, and in stories they help the hero out of trouble. When there are many tales involving a single character—such as Raven, Coyote, or Manabozho—the transcriptions are linked together today and called cycles see e. The body of American Indian folklore does not include riddles as found in African folklore, for example, nor does it include proverbs, though there are tales with morals attached. The importance of mythology within a culture is reflected in the status of storytellers, the time assigned to this activity, and the relevance of mythology to ceremonialism. Mythology consists primarily of animal tales and stories of personal and social relationships; the actors and characters involved in these stories are also an index to the beliefs and customs of the people. For example, the Navajo ceremonials, like the chants, are based entirely on the characters and incidents in the mythology. The dancers make masks under strict ceremonial control, and, when they wear them to represent the gods, they absorb spiritual strength. The Aztec ceremonials and sacrifices are believed to placate the gods who are the heroes of the mythology. Oral literatures North American cultures: Canadian and Greenlandic Arctic peoples are generally called Inuit; the U. Arctic literature embodies simple stories of hunting incidents in which the heroes are sometimes helped through supernatural power. Other stories include themes in which people ascend to the sky to become constellations, maltreated children become animals, and an orphan boy becomes successful. Still others surround the exploits and priestly magic of the shamans. In the region from Greenland to the Mackenzie River, Sedna is the highest spirit and controls the sea mammals; the Moon is a male deity who lives incestuously with his sister, the Sun. When she discovers he is her brother, she seizes a burning bundle of sticks and rushes away into the sky, the Moon pursuing her. There are many stories involving family life, as well as others that deal with the feuds between Inuit and the Native Americans south of them. The western Eskimos along the Pacific and Arctic coasts have the Raven cycle, a series of tales centred on Raven, a protagonist whose role ranges from culture hero to the lowest form of trickster. Many of the same plots and themes also occur in tales of the Northwest Coast culture. Around some coastal villages, a story about a flood that took place in the first days of the Earth is told. Many stories are especially intended for children and stress proper behaviour. They are often told by young girls to younger ones and are illustrated by incising figures in the snow or on the ground with an ivory snow knife. On the lower Yukon River, a migration legend is told about a long journey from east to west. The usual incident that breaks up this party of travelers is a quarrel, after which they divide into two groups, occupying separate villages, and for years make constant war on each other. Tales of hunting begin as personal adventures but become stylized with supernatural characters and events. Northwest Coast There is greater similarity in the mythology of the various tribes along the Northwest Coast than in other regions of North America. Collectors of folktales have gathered a long series of stories told in the region from the mouth of the Columbia River through southeastern Alaska into a Raven cycle. The protagonists of these stories—from south to north, Coyote, Mink, and Raven—vary from culture hero to trickster. In each subarea the stories elucidate the origin of a village, a clan, or a family and are regarded as the property of that group. Thus, these stories can be used by others only through permission or, sometimes, purchase. In Bungling Host, Trickster, after seeing his host produce food in various ways e. In Dog Husband, a girl has a secret lover who is a dog by day and a man by night. When she gives birth to pups, she is deserted by her tribe. In some versions, parents lose all their sons to a monster, and, when a new baby is born, it grows rapidly, kills the monster, and restores the brothers. Star Husband, another widely known myth, relates the story of two girls sleeping outdoors who wish the stars would marry them. They ascend to the sky, marry the stars, and experience a series of remarkable adventures. Among the Kwakiutl of Vancouver Island, the mythology is represented in an elaborate series of dances that illustrate characters and incidents with masks, puppets, and other mechanical devices. The principal events during the winter

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ceremonial season, these ceremonies include initiation into the secret societies, the highest of which is the so-called Cannibal Society; members of this society recount ancient stories of cannibalism but, contrary to some accounts, do not practice cannibalism themselves. Less elaborate forms of this winter ceremonial are found among the southern tribes who base their activities on the quest for the guardian spirit and on the return of the spirits to those who have seen them in visions. In order to exorcise these spirits, their songs must be sung and their dances performed. The Salish-speaking tribes of southern British Columbia and of Washington have less complicated costumes for this ceremonial, but their dancing is very interesting and vigorous. The attitude of the Northwest Coast Indians toward animals is expressed in rituals such as the first salmon ceremony and in the ceremonial treatment of the bear. When the first salmon of the spring run is caught, it is ceremonially cleaned and placed on a clean mat or a bed of fern leaves. It is welcomed with an address of thanks and promised good treatment. The entrails are wrapped in a mat and thrown into the river so that they can return to the land in the west where the salmon can tell how well he was treated. The salmon is carried to the house by a selected group—children, women only, or the family of the successful fisherman—and is roasted and eaten by the selected group, or a morsel may be distributed to each village resident. The bear is never killed wantonly. When seen, it is addressed in terms of kinship, an attitude that is shared by a variety of cultures.

California The many small tribes of California exhibit more unity in their mythology than is present in many other features of their culture. In the north-central area, the Kuksu cults enact the myths of the creator and the culture hero with Coyote and Thunder as the chief characters. In southern California, in ceremonies of the Chungichnich cults, contact with the highest god is achieved by smoking datura or jimsonweed, which produces hallucinations of animals. The boys initiated into the cults regard the animals as their guardian spirits. This concept relates the cult activity with the most fundamental feature of American Indian religion: Documentation of the mythology of the California tribes was thoroughly disrupted by Euro-American colonization, although some animal stories and a few themes about ill-defined characters have been recorded.

Southwest, Northeast, and Plains Southwest The Native Americans of New Mexico and Arizona, along with a few small tribes related to them in southern California, have cultural traditions with some features in common. In the folklore of the Southwest, the emergence and migration myths show the indigenous peoples emerging from an unpleasant underworld at the time when the Earth is not yet completely formed. They start a long trek southward, some looking for a sacred spot and others looking specifically for the centre of the Earth. In some instances they are led by a pair of culture heroes, the Twins, also called the Little War Gods, who help stabilize the surface of the Earth and teach the people many features of their culture, including ceremonials. When the people were weary during the migration, powerful spirit-beings known as kachinas came and danced until someone made fun of their peculiar faces and insulted them. The kachinas allowed the people to copy their masks and costumes and then returned to their home in the underworld. Since that time the men from the kivas, the ceremonial chambers to which all the men belonged, have made these costumes and masks and have performed the dances necessary to stimulate and protect the harvest, bring rain, and promote general welfare. They sometimes behave like unruly children and tease their grandmother to death. Coyote, in the Pueblo literature, is always sly and is often caught in his own wiles. A group of very crude and vulgar tales about him exist. The Athabaskan-speaking tribes of the Southwest are the Navajo and the Apache. Nowhere in America are mythology and ceremonial more closely associated than among the Navajo, where the myths are poetically expressed through great chants see Blessingway. The principal characters are the gods of the wind, the rain, the dawn, the Sun, the semiprecious stones, the sacred plants, corn maize, tobacco, squash, and the bean. The ceremonials are intended to cure sickness, both mental and physical, and protect people on dangerous missions rather than to inspire any sense of worship. All the arts are combined in the ceremonies: This is one of the most inspiring ceremonials devised by the American Indian. The other Athabaskan-speaking people, the Apache, are divided into several groups, of which the Lipan are particularly interesting. The

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southernmost of North American tribes, they live partly across the Mexican border. One of the monsters in the tales is Big Owl, a destructive cannibal in the form of a large owl. The story of the man seeking spiritual power from the gods who goes down the Colorado River in a hollow log to reach the holy places where the spirits live is almost identical to its Navajo version. There is a Lipan Coyote cycle, but there are no Spanish-derived tales.

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## Chapter 8 : Trickster - Wikipedia

*Native American literature: Native American literature, the traditional oral and written literatures of the indigenous peoples of the Americas. These include ancient hieroglyphic and pictographic writings of Middle America as well as an extensive set of folktales, myths, and oral histories that were transmitted for centuries.*

April 14, by Brittany McSorley Archetypal characters are a major component of all genres of literature, and can also be studied in terms of film, television, and theatre. Archetypes are present in all forms of media and artistic expression, and understanding them will lead to a more developed understanding of everything you watch and read. What is an Archetype? An archetype can also refer to a recurring symbol, particularly in the realms of art and literature. In literature, archetypes can exist in the form of a typical kind of character, a particular setting, a specific plot situation, or an overarching theme of the writing. These literary components act as prototypes, and they usually signify or represent a pattern. Character archetypes in particular are meant to represent patterns in human nature. Archetypal characters are usually very relatable to readers, due to the universality of their characteristics and behaviors. The presence of archetypal characters in literature helps to get the message of a work across to the reader, by appealing to specific universal components of human nature. The examples of archetypal characters throughout popular and classic literature are almost unlimited.

**Literary Archetypal Characters** One of the first people to examine the concept of archetypal characters was the philosopher Aristotle, in the time of ancient Greece. Aristotle studied the play *Oedipus Rex* *Oedipus the King* and decided that the title character perfectly embodied the components of what he deemed the tragic hero. A majority of Greek tragedy plays include the archetype of the tragic hero, and this archetype has impacted dramatic literature every since. The tragic hero evokes pity from the audience as her undergoes a change in fortune, from a positive situation in the beginning of the story, to a negative situation at its conclusion. The story will conclude with the downfall, and sometimes the death, of the tragic hero. The cause of the downfall is the result of a tragic flaw on the part of the hero, referred to by Aristotle as the *hamartia*. Examples of the tragic hero include Jay Gatsby from F. However, all heroes are not tragic, and all heroic tales do not end with the downfall or death of the protagonist. Another archetypal character, therefore, is known simply as the hero, rather than the tragic hero. The archetypal hero exhibits goodness, a kind heart, and inherent virtue. The hero is often alone in the world in one way or another; many archetypal heroes are orphans, and therefore have experienced significant loss before their story begins. He or she struggles against negative or malevolent forces, such as inherent evil or injustice, in an effort to restore balance and fairness to the world. Each of these characters embodies goodness and justice, and they must face a series of challenges and hardships in order for goodness and justice to prevail in the world. The reader is usually made to identify with the hero more than with any other character in the story, and is therefore cheering them on in their efforts to overcome their challenges. Another familiar archetypal character is often referred to as the mother. The mother is female, of a matronly appearance, and does not often have a developed backstory of her own; she acts as a source of comfort and help for the hero, but not as much else. The fairy godmother from *Cinderella* is one of the most well known examples of the mother archetype. Other examples include Glinda, the good witch from *L. The*

The mentor character is similar to the mother archetype, in that his or her function is to act as an advisor to the protagonist. Each of these characters provides guidance and knowledge to the protagonist, and their wisdom far surpasses the wisdom of those they are mentoring. Apart from the hero, the best known archetypal character is the villain. The villain embodies everything that hero opposes, making him or her the opposite of the hero. For this reason, the villain is often referred to as the antagonist, in contrast to the protagonist. The fool is sometimes also known as the village idiot. The fool is a source of laughter for the other characters and for the audience or reader, but can also elicit pity when the plot of the story calls for it. In Shakespearean

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drama, the fool often functions as method by which the author can cut through the pretensions of the other characters and get down to the truth of the matter. In the Harry Potter series, Neville Longbottom begins as this archetypal character, though he grows to embody more heroic characteristics as the novels progress. The damsel in distress is another popular archetypal character. In fact, literary analysis and discussion has often examined the lack of strong female characters in classic and historical literature, because a majority of female characters often embody the damsel in distress archetype. In the modern era, there is a larger body of literature that includes strong female protagonists. She is delicate, womanly, and usually meek and demure in manner. The Value of Archetypes As you can see, archetypal characters span all genres of literature, from varied time periods and a multitude of authors. Archetypes like these examples are also prominent throughout the world of film, television, and dramatic and theatrical literature. The presence of any of these character types contributes to the universality of the story being told, appealing to the aspects of human nature that most readers and audiences can identify with. Familiarity with archetypal characters will improve your understanding of, and your ability to analyze, literature, film, theatre, and any other storytelling mediums.

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## Chapter 9 : Universal Myths and Symbols: Animal Creatures and Creation

*Some of the reasons why American literature developed along original lines and thus conveyed a message of its own to the world are to be found in the changed environment and the varying problems and ideals of American life.*

The Old West is the setting of many movies, with an enduring place in the mythology of America. Ancient and mediaeval epic tales like the Iliad and Odyssey, Gilgamesh, and the Chanson de Roland had plots made up of modular elements taken from traditional themes or story lines. These same themes, with the same panoply of elements, as outlined in the following essay, have persisted through many civilizations, and can be found in our own movies. We act out the plots of our myths, too, as can be seen in some poignant moments from our space program. The movies named are ones that were current in theaters or on television at the time. Later readers can fill in the blanks with movies of other eras, finding in them the same themes and the same recurring characters.

Identifying the elements of myth: The Godfather and Odysseus Blood spurting from his chest, the young Italian writhes in a dance of death, his body jerking to the rhythm of the machine gun bullets. Do these scenes, from The Godfather and Jaws, represent an American myth of cruelty and violence? Or should the word "myth" be reserved for more austere and decorous tales, like those we associate with the gods and goddesses of an idealized Greek and Roman antiquity, leaving us to dismiss The Godfather and Jaws as gruesomely hypnotic stories? Many people are surprised to learn that ancient myth was often at least as violent, if not more so, than the mayhem of our modern fantasies. The Greek god Kronos castrated his father with a pruning hook, then swallowed his own children; later, he was forced to vomit them up. The accursed hero Atreus cut the children of his brother Thyestes into little pieces, then served them to their father at a banquet. So much for the austere and decorous. But mythologers today define "myth" in a more subtle and discerning way, to include both the Corleone family and the shark, and Kronos and Thyestes, as well as gentler products of the human imagination. Myth is the system of recurring patterns and themes that people use to make sense out of the world. Significantly, ancient and modern patterns often turn out to be the same, even in small details; in their universality, they seem to have an intimate connection with the way all human beings think.

The Godfather, and its companion, Godfather II, have been justly praised for excellence in such technical matters as acting and direction; their popularity is enhanced by less pleasant preoccupations: The typical Succession Myth covers three generations--grandfather, father, and son. Or the succession might be a series of female characters, grandmother, mother, and daughter. It chronicles the passage of power from generation to generation. A typical ancient example is the Theogony of Hesiod, a contemporary of Homer: Ouranos, the Sky God, was castrated by his son Kronos; Kronos, in turn, was overthrown by his youngest son Zeus, who became king of the gods. This story, with its Oedipal associations, describes the basic facts of family descent and competition. He is the youngest of three sons: This variation in which the youngest and least-favored ends by being the most successful, is known from folklore as The Tale of the Three Brothers. The female equivalent is Cinderella. It is the way of mythic stories to combine more than one myth; the basic theme is extended with subplots from other mythic themes. This gives greater length and variety. Born in secret, the infant Hero is hidden from hostile members of the older generation. But the Hero grows miraculously fast, or attains prodigious strength at an early age, and so is able to save himself. Zeus grew quickly under the care of the Nymphs, and forced his father to vomit up all his brothers and sisters, whom he had swallowed--demonstrating that we moderns have nothing on the ancients when it comes to action and violence. When he is older, the Hero performs the Great Exploit, which confirms him as a mature Hero. Always one of the most popular parts of the Hero myth, this is the part where the Hero kills the Monster, or performs some equivalent feat. The world has always loved a good monster. Zeus destroyed Typhoeus and the Titans, but the Exploit proliferates easily into a whole series, like the Twelve Labors of Herakles. After the

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Exploit, the Hero consolidates his power by distributing rewards and positions to his friends and punishing his enemies. His children are the fourth--Zeus, too, had many sons. Michael goes to Sicily to escape the cop-killing rap. The Journey theme has always been a favorite one for story-tellers everywhere, as a metaphor for life and its experiences. It is popular with us, too, for Americans are also a mobile people. But the relationship of man and Goddess is doomed, for the Hero returns to his human wife. The Hero also meets two Helpers, one female, the other male, an aged or immortal seer. On his return, the Hero loses someone near and dear to him, the Substitute Who Dies in place of the Hero. In *The Godfather*, Apollonia, the beautiful girl described as "looking more Greek than Italian," is the Goddess with whom the Hero lives but with whom he cannot stay. Iasion, beloved of Demeter, suffered this punishment; Anchises dared not reveal his afternoon of love with Aphrodite for fear of it. But in *The Godfather* it is Apollonia herself who is killed, by a bomb in their car intended for Michael. Tragedy for the goddess was always implicit in the theme; for though immortal, the ancient goddess was touched by death by losing her mortal lover. With the mortal Apollonia, the motif is made explicit. Michael goes back alone to America, where he marries his back-home girlfriend, Kay Adams. This is the Death of the Substitute, without which the Hero cannot return from the great Journey. The Journey theme is a myth of Death and Resurrection. Throughout mythology, there are many death and resurrection myths, sometimes literal, as in Christian mythology, but also including journeys to the Underworld of the Dead, journeys up to Heaven and back, and other lengthy absences from society. A woman or young person occupying the role of Hero may experience "death" by being raped or kidnapped--an involuntary journey. But usually the Journey is motivated by a felt lack or longing, and there is good reason to think the basic longing is for immortality. A myth even older than the Greek, the Sumero-Babylonian Gilgamesh epic, illustrates this clearly. Gilgamesh crossed the sea in search of immortality. Arrived at the other side, he was told that if he could stay awake for six days and seven nights, he would become immortal, but he fell asleep. He was given another chance to become immortal, if he could pluck and eat the magic plant that grew at the bottom of the sea. He plucked the plant, but before he could eat it, a snake ate it, and became immortal instead of Gilgamesh. The Search for the Secret of Life is not unknown to us: A detective named Thorn Charlton Heston sets out to learn the secret that he knows the authorities are hiding from the people. Helped by a beautiful girl and an old man, appropriately named Solomon, Thorn learns the secret, which is that the wafers are made from human corpses. But he cannot bring back the secret; he is murdered by the authorities before he can tell the people what they are eating. But the Journey Myth, in common with other Death and Resurrection myths, may have less to do with literal dying and its literal aftermath than with the psychological coming to maturity of the individual, who must give up his infantile belief in his own immortality and omnipotence, and confront his own mortality. It is an experience from which he emerges a sadder but wiser person. This is why the Substitute must die: No one can return from the Land of the Dead without losing some part of himself; no one can reach maturity except at great cost. The Death of the Substitute is so important that it often appears even in stories that lack an explicit Journey. War stories frequently have both the meeting with the goddess and the Death of the Substitute. In such movies as *The Big Parade*, *Wings*, *Task Force*, and many others, the hero goes overseas to war, falls in love with a girl often French or Oriental, and his best buddy gets killed. In the war movies, the hero sometimes gets the girl at the end and sometimes not, but someone important to the hero always dies. The cop-killing provides the motivation for the Journey, and this, too, is thematically correct; a Journey required as expiation for a murder is a variation known from many ancient examples. Apollonia, the Goddess, represents both sexual initiation and that life-enhancing touch with mysterious forces that we often, for lack of a better explanation, ascribe to a supernatural agency. But Michael cannot remain forever isolated from real life in his idyllic Sicilian hideaway. Like all of us, he returns to the responsibilities of his mature life. On his return, he consolidates his position by distributing positions and power to his friends and punishing his enemies, completing his role in the

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Succession myth. A Godfather III is already being readied for television. We have had other Succession stories; the familiar show-business story about the aging star who is being displaced by the younger, more glamorous star is another version of the same myth. The most famous examples are A Star is Born, which has just been remade again, and All About Eve, recently revived on Broadway under its original name of Applause. In a story framed by the cyclic year that begins with the burning of the Witch of Winter, an old woman dies, a young woman marries, and a little girl catches the bridal bouquet. The myth of Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus is old, but it seems to have a particular applicability to our own times. II Widening our search for mythic themes: Indeed we can, and a look at some other movies from this point of view gives a deeper understanding of both the movies and the myths. Some movies use the myths already found in The Godfather, but other themes appear, too, illuminating other aspects of our personal and social lives. For the mythic themes have to do with the universal life crises--birth, maturation, survival, sickness, death, and those moments when human beings confront the inexplicable forces of the universe. The myths separate and interweave, even as the events of which they are stylized versions touch us in changing patterns during our real lives. The myth that is the "frame" in one story may supply the subject for another and vice versa. In The Godfather, the frame, or basic myth, was the Succession, and the Journey was the subsidiary theme. But the Journey could just as well be, and often is, the frame, into which other myths are fit as details. Odysseus spent ten years getting home from the Trojan War, which had itself lasted ten years. In Sounder, Nathan Morgan, the Black sharecropper, is sentenced to a work camp for a petty theft. And this, on the same day that he had proved his prowess in an American heroic activity, the local baseball game. His son David goes looking for him. As in the Odyssey, the son does not find his father, though in both stories the father eventually returns. David meets the Two Helpers, but instead of male and female, they are both female--but one is White, the other Black. Returning, like Odysseus, injured and in rags, the father--again like Odysseus--is recognized first by his dog on his return. Who is the Substitute Who Dies in Sounder? But father and son return home injured, too, and a close look reveals a recurring symbolism: