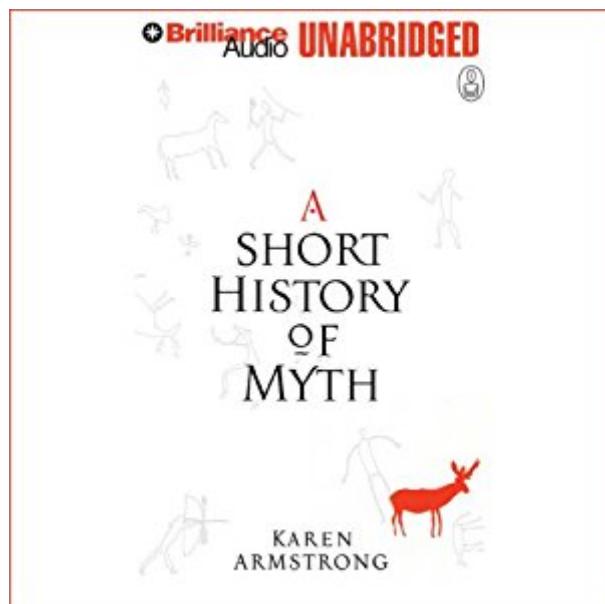


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# A Short History Of Myth: The Myths



## Synopsis

What are myths? How have they evolved? And why do we still so desperately need them? The history of myth is the history of humanity; our stories and beliefs, our curiosity and attempts to understand the world, link us to our ancestors and each other. Myths help us make sense of the universe. Armstrong takes us from the Palaeolithic period and the myths of the hunters right up to the "Great Western Transformation" of the last five hundred years and the discrediting of myth by science. Heralding a major series of retellings of international myths by authors from around the world, Armstrong's characteristically insightful and eloquent book serves as a brilliant and thought-provoking introduction to myth in the broadest sense—and why we dismiss it only at our peril. "Witty, informative and contemplative: Ms. Armstrong can simplify complex ideas, but she is never simplistic." —New York Times Book Review  
"Armstrong writes with sensitivity and wisdom. She employs a breadth of learning that reflects the scintillating, shifting light and shade of human experience." —The Times  
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## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 3 hours and 30 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Brilliance Audio

Audible.com Release Date: August 27, 2008

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B001F0EYLK

Best Sellers Rank: #93 in Books > Reference > Encyclopedias & Subject Guides > Literature #157 in Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Reference #171 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fiction & Literature > Literary Criticism

## Customer Reviews

Karen Armstrong is a terrific writer & I consider her the best religious writer of our time. She never preaches. Not biased. Just tells the facts as written over the ages. I have read most of her books. The best, I think, was "The Great Transformation." However I just finished reading "Fields of Blood-Religion and the History of Violence." This is an excellent read, indispensable for those who

seek the meaning behind the global politics we have today. I recommend all of Armstrong's books to anyone interested in history, religion, politics, & the historical, religious figures of note. .

In a swift 149 pages, Karen Armstrong covers a lot of ground. She communicates the importance of myth. She shows how myth has evolved through history, moving through different phases (the Paleolithic; the Neolithic; Early Civilization; the Axial Age; the Post-Axial Period; and, the Great Western Transformation [encompassing the scientific revolution leading to the enlightenment, modernism, and post-modernism]). In each of these periods, we get a strong sense of how mythology shaped the fabric of society, and how social, intellectual, political, and economic factors in turn shaped mythology. One of the strongest sections of the book is the final 15 pages, where Armstrong depicts modern society in tatters due to its inability to formulate a coherent myth. This is an excellent overview of the subject, one that I'll return to.

There are really enough reviews. Two comments to justify the four stars:First the criticisms and comments below (above?): the greatest weakness in her book is that she offers her opinions and speculations as facts. They are not, they are something much higher. They are interpretations, often brilliant and well footnoted. The introduction left me cold and I disagree with some of the conclusions, especially in the last chapter. So what? We are different people. I agree that this should never be the only work you read about mythology. It might make a good introduction, if it is carefully explained that these are interpretations. Her failure to make this clear is a flaw. Second, much of the speculation is brilliant, well argued, as supported by examples. She explains the role and nature of myth provocatively, in the best sense of the word, from her first chapter on the earliest myths to her last, which ends with a meditation on art, particularly modern fiction as a modern parallel to mythology. Her writing is especially good and clear. Those who have found her writing too thick or two difficult should go back reading comic books.

Karen Armstrong's \*A Short History of Myth\* is a tour de force. Not limited to a discussion of what society often thinks of when they think of "myth," Armstrong explains how the mystical/spiritual dimension of humans has expressed itself. Myth, she shows, is not something "false" but is, rather a way of expressing deep truths. She describes its beginnings among earliest hominids and explains clearly how it was affected by the growth of civilizations up to the modern day, where it remains an essential human experience. For people who misunderstand holy scriptures as being literal histories - and for those (like Bill Maher) who disparage religion because so many religious people have that

misunderstanding - this book should be required reading.

I purchased this book because an abiding interest in mythology and theology. Ms. Armstrong is one of the best authors in the field of theology. From her modest beginnings to being invited by the Bush White House as a counselor for the military intervention in Iraq. She has demonstrated a remarkably balanced view of the religions of the world. With Ms. Armstrong as your guide she explains to us the purpose and the development of mythology from its prehistoric origins to its involvement in more modern times. In an easy-to-read direct fashion. She explains complex concepts so that even a novice reader would enjoy this book. I believe I'm going to hand this book onto my 10-year-old niece who's expressed an interest in Greek and Roman mythology. Ms. Armstrong is a first-rate scholar and a first-rate author. I thoroughly enjoyed every book of hers that I've read.

I found this book very interesting, insightful and the author was very concise with the subject. I have read Joseph Campbell's book, the Power of Myths and Mrs Armstrong's book was right in line with his.

I purchased this for my World Mythology class at my local community college, and it was excellent. Of course, I may be slightly biased, because the class itself was absolutely wonderful and gave me a slightly different reading of the book than I might have had by myself. That aside, the book is concise and makes Armstrong makes her points very well. I love her interpretation of myth, and I thoroughly enjoyed reading the last chapter. Highly recommended, whether it's for a class or you're just looking to learn more about mythology.

She can cover a lot of HX in a clear way.

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