



The Key: How to Write Damn Good Fiction Using the Power of Myth

By James N. Frey

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In his widely read guides *How to Write a Damn Good Novel* and *How to Write a Damn Good Novel II: Advanced Techniques*, popular novelist and fiction-writing coach James N. Frey showed tens of thousands of writers how--starting with rounded, living, breathing, dynamic characters--to structure a novel that sustains its tension and development and ends in a satisfying, dramatic climax.

Now, in *The Key*, Frey takes his no-nonsense, "Damn Good" approach and applies it to Joseph Campbell's insights into the universal structure of myths. Myths, says Frey, are the basis of all storytelling, and their structures and motifs are just as powerful for contemporary writers as they were for Homer. Frey begins with the qualities found in mythic heroes--ancient and modern--such as the hero's special talent, his or her wound, status as an "outlaw," and so on. He then demonstrates how the hero is initiated--sent on a mission, forced to learn the new rules, tested, and suffers a symbolic death and rebirth--before he or she can return home. Using dozens of classical and contemporary novels and films as models, Frey shows how these motifs and forms work their powerful magic on the reader's imagination.

The Key is designed as a practical step-by-step guide for fiction writers and screen writers who want to shape their own ideas into a mythic story.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

"You don't begin with meaning," according to fiction writer Rick DeMarinis, "you end with it." A critic approaching a story from a mythological standpoint might find a mythological theme, but "there are as many themes in a story as there are critical theories." Hogwash, says James N. Frey. "Mythic structures, forms, motifs, and characters ... are 'The Key' to writing more-powerful fiction," and it is a fiction writer's job to imbue his or her work with them. In *The Key*, Frey describes each of the mythic qualities (ascribed to the mythic hero, the "Evil One," the "Call to Adventure," and the other elements of the mythic journey) and offers examples of how to use them in one's writing. Don't get the wrong idea. Frey is not interested in academic or overly intellectual writing. Sure, he invents a Proust-reading Nevada cowboy to illustrate the concept of "The Hero's Lover," but there are more references here to James Bond than to Homer. Frey advises using first-person journal writing to get to know one's characters. He emphasizes fiction's need for conflict at every turn. And he recommends working from a premise, as it helps one know what to leave out (everything in the story must work to further the premise). Frey defines every possible mythic character or situation, then insists one not feel confined by them all. "The mythic pattern is not a straitjacket," he says, "it's Play-Doh. Have fun with it." --*Jane Steinberg*

From Library Journal

In this well-written and witty how-to, Frey, a writing teacher and author of the "Damn Good" writing books, focuses on the tradition of myth as a recipe for storytelling. Drawing from Joseph Campbell's *The Power of Myth*, Frey explains that people respond strongly to mythic images and will essentially read the same stories over and over again; readers of romances are a good example of this concept. The first half of the book is especially interesting, for it examines the mythic structure in such diverse works as *Robin Hood*, *Beowulf*, and *Jaws* and looks at myths that function in everyday modern life. In the second half, Frey provides the reader with a sample novella titled "The Blue Light" to illustrate the use of myth as a writing tool. Expect beginning writers to use this informative guide along with the author's other books. Recommended for public libraries. DLisa J. Cihlar, Monroe P.L., WI
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Review

"You could struggle through learning the basics of storytelling by trial and error or you could just read this book. I wish I had this fifteen years ago."—Sara Pariott, screenwriter for *The Runaway Bride*

"For me, the mythological approach has indeed been the key to creating stories that have a far greater impact on the reader than anything I'd written before."—Tess Collins, author of *The Law of Blood* and *The Law of Revenge*

"Well-written and witty how-to."—*Library Journal*

"Everything I know about plotting a novel, I learned from Frey."—Marjorie Reynolds, author of *The Starlite Drive-In*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Luis Martin:

Do you have favorite book? Should you have, what is your favorite's book? Reserve is very important thing for us to know everything in the world. Each e-book has different aim as well as goal; it means that guide has different type. Some people feel enjoy to spend their a chance to read a book. They can be reading whatever they acquire because their hobby is reading a book. Why not the person who don't like reading a book? Sometime, individual feel need book if they found difficult problem as well as exercise. Well, probably you will want this The Key: How to Write Damn Good Fiction Using the Power of Myth.

Robin Martz:

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William Burmeister:

This The Key: How to Write Damn Good Fiction Using the Power of Myth is great guide for you because the content that is certainly full of information for you who always deal with world and still have to make decision every minute. This particular book reveal it info accurately using great plan word or we can claim no rambling sentences in it. So if you are read the item hurriedly you can have whole information in it. Doesn't mean it only will give you straight forward sentences but challenging core information with attractive delivering sentences. Having The Key: How to Write Damn Good Fiction Using the Power of Myth in your hand like getting the world in your arm, facts in it is not ridiculous one particular. We can say that no publication that offer you world throughout ten or fifteen minute right but this guide already do that. So , this can be good reading book. Hi Mr. and Mrs. hectic do you still doubt that will?

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