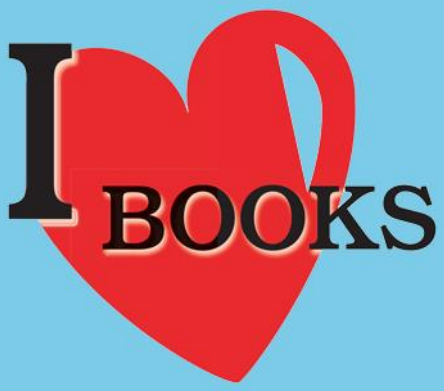

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Opening extract from

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Welcome to the world of COOL MYTHOLOGY!

In order for you to understand all the amazing mythologies of the world, and learn about what mythology actually is, you'll have to travel back in time to the very beginning of human history. But that won't be enough. You'll have to travel forward into the future to catch a glimpse of the destruction of the world. But even that won't be enough. You'll also have to travel to other dimensions, other realms, and deep within your own imagination.

Myths come in all shapes and sizes. From folklore and legends, monsters to beasts, allegories to metaphors, myths and mythological ideas permeate every part of the world, every language and every culture, no matter how different they are. They help us understand our past, and they help us identify with our humanity, no matter what part of the world we happen to live in. From Native American folklores to Arthurian legends, from stories told by African tribes to ancient Greek tales, myths help us understand our place in the world – and the many other realms that could be more than just fantasy. All myths are rooted in the basic human desire to understand the world around us, and to understand a culture's unique mythology is to understand your world just a little better.

Ahead of you is a long but heroic quest. It is a journey of self-discovery, and one in which, come the end, you'll have reached a better understanding of the world.

So before we begin, take a deep breath and rub your eyes … things are about to get a little bit weird. But that's a good thing. Enjoy!

'Heaven and Hell are within us,
and all the gods are within us…
They are magnified dreams,
and dreams are manifestations
in image form of the energies of the
body in conflict with each other.
That is what myth is.'

Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth*

Map of World Mythology

Let's go on a journey through time and space, travelling around the entire world, and see how many mythologies we can find ...

NORTH AMERICA

There are many North American myths that have wandered around the landscape. From the Ho-Chuck, Cherokee, Choctaw, Iroquois, Seneca and Creek tribes of the east Atlantic, through to the Blackfoot, Pawnee, Lakota and Crow stories of the centre of America, and finally, the Kwakiutl, Nootka, Lummi and Haida tribes of Pacific west America.

MESOAMERICAN

There are other cool Mesoamerican myths to check out too. The Teotihuacan, Monte-Alto, Olmec, Mayan and Aztec myths all have similar deities to the Incan mythologies, that existed in countries such as El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Mexico, Belize and Nicaragua.

SOUTH AMERICA

The Incas were not the only South American civilisation with a rich mythology. In the nearby Amazon Rainforest, the Achagua, Guarani, Wayuu, Pemon and Carib cultures all had a rich mythology relating to their creation.

MEDITERRANEAN

The Romans and Greeks may have the most famous characters, but there is a whole collection of gods and deities from this region.

MIDDLE EAST

Following the reign of Zoroastrianism, Persia changed its belief to Islam, but other mythologies including Kurdish, Ossetian and Armenian also sprang to life.

INDIA

Originating in Northern India, near the mighty river Indus (from where Hinduism takes its name), Hindu mythology has been called the world's oldest belief system.

NORTH AFRICA

North African mythology encompasses Ancient Egypt, the Nubian mythology of Sudan and the ancient Berber culture, which still exists today in countries such as Morocco.

Something out of Nothing

From intelligent design to multiverse theories, from Genesis to Brahma, from Scandinavian fire demons to the Aboriginal Rainbow Serpent, or whatever else you can think of, there are many ideas on how life, the Universe and everything popped into creation.

A God Named Pangu

Many cultures around the world, from Egypt to China, Finland to Polynesia, believe in the cosmic egg creation myth. In China, for example, the myth of Pangu, developed by Taoist monks more than 3,000 years ago, says the Universe began as an egg. A god named Pangu, born inside the egg, broke the shell into two halves: the upper half became the sky, while the lower half became the Earth. As the god grew in size, the sky and the Earth grew too and were separated further. When Pangu died, his body became different parts of the Earth.

King Indian: Brahma

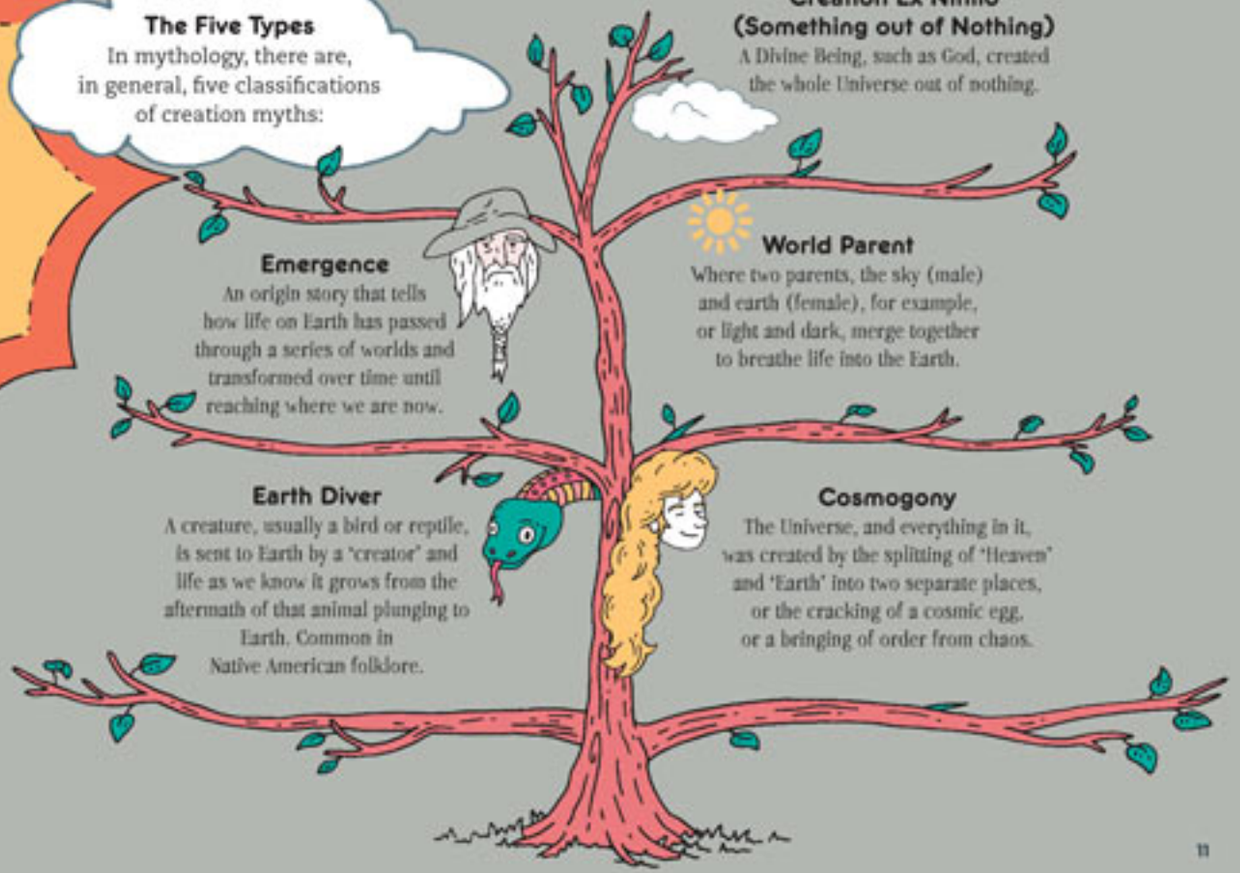
Brahma is the god of creation in Hinduism, a religion practised mainly in India. Brahma has four faces, north, east, south and west, and was brought into being by thought alone, first creating knowledge and then the Universe. He was born in a golden egg and its two halves became Heaven and Earth. When Brahma became lonely he divided himself into two forms, male and female. This division will continue until all life has been created, then the god Shiva will destroy the world, and Brahma will create a new one – and the cycle will continue.

CREATION

Creation myths are the most common forms of myths in the world's cultures. They date back to the earliest times when these cultures first evolved, and thoughts immediately turned to 'Where are we?' and 'How did we get here?' and, most importantly, 'Where are we going?'

BANG!!

The Five Types
In mythology, there are, in general, five classifications of creation myths:



Creation Ex Nihilo (Something out of Nothing)

A Divine Being, such as God, created the whole Universe out of nothing.

World Parent

Where two parents, the sky (male) and earth (female), for example, or light and dark, merge together to breathe life into the Earth.

Emergence

An origin story that tells how life on Earth has passed through a series of worlds and transformed over time until reaching where we are now.

Earth Diver

A creature, usually a bird or reptile, is sent to Earth by a 'creator' and life as we know it grows from the aftermath of that animal plunging to Earth. Common in Native American folklore.

Cosmogony

The Universe, and everything in it, was created by the splitting of 'Heaven' and 'Earth' into two separate places, or the cracking of a cosmic egg, or a bringing of order from chaos.