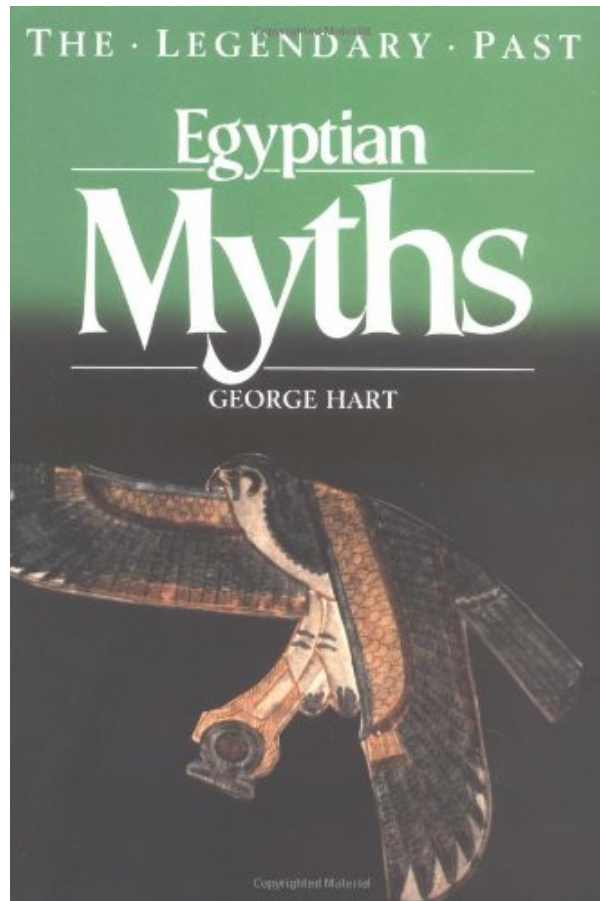


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Review

"A fascinating first look at the religion and mythology of the ancient Egyptians." (Classical World)

From the Back Cover

The rich panorama of ancient Egyptian mythology has survived through tomb paintings, temple inscriptions, and papyri. Through these delightful and often amusing tales we can appreciate more fully the beliefs and imagination of the ancient Egyptians.

About the Author

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The rich panorama of ancient Egyptian mythology has survived through tomb paintings, temple inscriptions, and papyri. This account begins with the creation legends of Heliopolis, Memphis, and Hermopolis and illustrates the intellectual struggles of the Egyptians to explain the beginning of the world. The myths that follow range from stories about the gods—the murder of Osiris and vengeance of Horus, Isis and the seven scorpions, Sakhmet and the virtual slaughter of mankind—to fables such as the Shipwrecked Sailor and the Enchanted Island. Through these delightful and often amusing tales, we can appreciate more fully the beliefs and imagination of the ancient Egyptians.

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Falls between two stools

By DAJ

Hart tries to cover the major points of Egyptian mythology in a fairly sophisticated way. For instance, he describes the sources for most of the myths or mythic episodes he discusses, rather than assembling disparate sources into a single story, as many of the simplest retellings of Egyptian myths do. But he's constrained by the format of the *Legendary Past* series, in which each book is only 80 pages long. There's a limit to how much he can analyze the significance of each myth when there's so much to cover and so little space. It doesn't help that a lot of the space is taken up by his descriptions of the source material (and, weirdly,

quotations from T. S. Eliot). The book therefore summarizes episodes of mythology more than it retells them, so it's not very engaging reading, but it only patchily describes the symbolic meanings behind myths and how they related to Egyptian society and customs. It falls between two stools, not succeeding as storytelling or as analysis.

The first two chapters treat the creation myths and the myth of Osiris' death and Horus and Seth's struggle for the throne. Two much shorter chapters cover stories about Isis and the Destruction of Mankind by the Eye of Ra. The next chapter is about Ra's journey through the underworld, based on the Amduat, Book of Caverns, and Book of Gates. The last two chapters are on historical Egyptian figures who became the subjects of legend after their deaths, and some of the fantastical short stories in Egyptian literature.

If you want a more substantial book that covers ancient Egyptian legends and fantastical works of fiction as well as mythology, Joyce Tyldesley's *Myths and Legends of Ancient Egypt* is far more extensive.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Lovely Afternoon Study

By AnakaliaKlemm

I've read this book twice. It's easy to do, as it's only 80 pages. I'll surely read it again down the road since I am classically homeschooling my child and repeat our school topics every four years. George Hart's book is definitely a scholarly one, so yeah, it's a bit dry, but if you're in the mood for scholarly writing, it's pretty great - he even has a few snarky comments here and there if you look for them. It's an afternoon study-date. Filled with mostly the stories of Isis and crew and gives you the back drop by which all the Egyptian lore stems, complete with archaeological tidbits and which museum had what at the time of the publication. Worth picking up for cheap and keeping in your collection, in my opinion. (I purchased my copy at Half Price Books years ago.)

13 of 16 people found the following review helpful.

an excellent introduction to the subject of mythology

By Francesca Jourdan

Written by one of the most prominent and eminent Egyptologists of the modern era, this book covers, amongst others, creation myths and relates in vivid and colourful detail the myths of Horus and Seth, Isis and Osiris, together with the ever-popular myth of kingship, the myth of cataclysm, and Isis and the scorpions. The book examines closely renowned Ancient Egyptian books, such as *The Book of Am-Duat*, *the Book of Caverns*, and *The Book of Gates*, with the express aim of providing the visual and textual backdrop to the myths. Imhotep, the architect of the Third Dynasty pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara, features prominently in the mythology of ancient Egypt. Hart captures eloquently the life and history of Imhotep, as well as the construction and perpetuation of his divinity status in later times. These historical and mythological perspectives make, along with amusing stories such as **The Shipwrecked Sailor** and **The Tale of Two Brothers**, for absorbing and informative reading.

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