



Egyptian Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Goddesses, and Traditions of Ancient Egypt

Geraldine Pinch

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From stories of resurrected mummies and thousand-year-old curses to powerful pharaohs and the coveted treasures of the Great Pyramids, ancient Egypt has had an unfaltering grip on the modern imagination. Now, in *Egyptian Mythology*, Geraldine Pinch offers a comprehensive introduction that untangles the mystery of Egyptian Myth.

Spanning Ancient Egyptian culture--from 3200 BC to AD 400--Pinch opens a door to this hidden world and casts light on its often misunderstood belief system. She discusses the nature of myths and the history of Egypt, from the predynastic to the postpharaonic period. She explains how Egyptian culture developed around the flooding of the Nile, or the "inundation," a phenomenon on which the whole welfare of the country depended, and how aspects of the inundation were personified as deities. She explains that the usually cloudless skies made for a preoccupation with the stars and planets. Indeed, much early Egyptian mythology may have developed to explain the movement of these celestial bodies. She provides a timeline covering the seven stages in the mythical history of Egypt and outlining the major events of each stage, such as the reign of the sun God. A substantial A to Z section covers the principal themes and concepts of Egyptian mythology as well as the most important deities, demons, and other characters. For anyone who wants to know about Anubis, the terrifying canine god who presided over the mummification of bodies and guarded burials, or Hathor, the golden goddess who helped women to give birth and the dead to be reborn, or an explanation of the *nun*, the primeval ocean from which all life came, *Egyptian Mythology* is the place to look.

Egyptian Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Goddesses, and Traditions of Ancient Egypt Details

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Jody says

Geraldine Pinch is such a good writer! This book is scholarly with lots of annotations and sources listed but still very readable and interesting.

She goes through a time line, so the reader can place people and events. Following this section, deities are listed in detail.

The bibliography is amazing -- she describes each book and its points of value. (I want them all!)

A super book!

NaomiRuth says

Although, over-all, I was able to learn some from this book, I was not overly impressed. I found Betro's book on hieroglyphics much easier to read. Though, my being off-put by the style of the book could be that this book is not meant to be read straight through. If it is only used as a reference book then I would say it would be very helpful and useful to keep as a guide. It is not, however, a book to be read straight through.

Jessica Williams says

While I was reading I made sure to take notes about the gods and goddesses that engrossed my mind. I learned that Ancient Greeks recycled knowledge from Egyptians, which is not surprising. It's a shame that Europeans are so fascinated with Egyptian culture, but cannot, by any means, respect the knowledge that Egyptians shared with them. The ancient Egyptians were Black. Arabs didn't invade until the 7th century. Why attempt to wipe out my history? The proof is in the pudding; we can look at the garbs that were worn and compare with the material that West Africans utilized. Even the Arabic language is relatively different than what the Egyptians used. Egyptians lost their land when they decided to split power. When you separate authority, you lose the ability to govern effectively, which is why Egypt was invaded by the Persians, Greeks, and Arabs. After thousands of years of invasion, our blood was diluted. I will not allow anyone to delete the indigenous people from Egypt.

I learned in my Biological Anthropology class that Europeans dug up the bodies of Africans and Native Americans to prove their physical and mental superiority. In this book, we learn that 19th century Europeans held mummy unwrapping parties. Completely disregarding the rituals that were used to guide the dead to the afterlife. Chants were written inside and outside of the coffins to protect the deceased.

My final message to all readers would be,

Respect my mind, respect the dead, and respect my gods.

Peace!

Mac says

I recently listened to a lecture series on the history of ancient Egypt. I became fascinated with the topic and wanted to learn more about the mythology and religion of the people in the Nile valley. Geraldine Pinch's "Egyptian Mythology" was exactly what I was looking for.

In her book, Pinch first surveys Egyptian history with an eye to the different extant sources that give clues about Egyptian gods and goddesses. The second section tries to recount the Egyptians' story of creation and the developments that led up to the first kings on the Nile. I say "tries" because there are many conflicting versions of these tales. Pinch suggests the variations while giving a good sense of the general flow. The third section is an alphabetical listing of important gods, goddesses, and concepts in Egyptian mythology. Many listings are cross-referenced with related gods, and Pinch also notes the primary sources (Pyramid texts, coffin texts, Books of the Dead, etc.) for her interpretations. Finally there is a good annotated bibliography at the end of the book, plus a glossary of technical terms.

If you are interested in this topic, I can highly recommend this book. If not compelling, the text is informative and clear. The book is also well-illustrated with images from Egyptian art that support the text.

Sara says

This is an absolutely must-have book for anyone researching the religion, gods and goddesses of ancient Egypt. It provides an excellent and plausible explanation of the origin and content of Egyptian religion, and traces the myths and legends through the various iterations available through the Pyramid Texts, Coffin Texts, and The Book of the Dead. It's an excellent reference book for the multiple religious centers and the various combinations of deities that ruled in each one. Among the many fascinating facts I learned was that while Egypt as a land borders on the Mediterranean Sea, and certainly the ancient Egyptians were familiar with boating up and down the Nile, they were not seafaring in the traditional sense, and had no God/Goddess of the Sea. There were however multiple deities to describe the various stages and conditions of the river. Just an excellent book!

Tommy says

This book was a very good reference guide. I think Pinch does a great job of structuring this book. It has sections of Linear Time, Cyclical Time, and an alphabetical guide of Deities and concepts. Not only does this outline do a great job of catching all of the nuances of everything in Egyptian religion/mythology but it shows different ways to understand these ideas.

Pinch explains the territorial and fluid nature of Egyptian beliefs very well and does her best to place them in historical context and place what the actual beliefs may have been (or how they changed).

This type of book may be less useful now with the prevalence of things like wikipedia but I still think this book is a fine resource. Detailed enough to be valuable, yet light enough to be readable.

James says

Egyptian Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Goddesses, and Traditions of Ancient Egypt by Geraldine Pinch, an Egyptologist at the Oriental Institute of Oxford University and a Member of the Editorial Board of the Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions is a good reference work on Ancient Egypt in general and their thought, cosmology, and religion in particular.

She explains that Ancient Egyptians thought of time both as linear and cyclical contained in the myth of Ancient Egypt. They experienced the past, present and future of linear time (straight line). The linear mythic story of Ancient Egypt contained seven stages: "chaos (pre-creation), the emergence of the creator (Sun God), the creation of the world and its inhabitants, the reign of the sun god, the period of direct rule by other deities (Gods), the period (term) of rule by semi-divine kings (history), and the return to chaos" (57). The unbroken cycles of decay, death, and re-birth occurred in cyclical time. Symbolically, the snake that swallows its tail (GK - Ouroboros) signifies eternity, universe renewing itself: every end could be a beginning. Examples include the flooding of the Nile, the Egyptian year, the seeming journey of the sun from night to day, and the eternal journey of the soul.

An encyclopedic A to Z section covers the principal themes and concepts of Egyptian mythology as well as the most important deities, demons, and other characters. Under 'P' appears PRIMEAVAELE MOUND "the first land to rise above the primeval ocean at the dawn of time" (180). The comprehensive index describes Ka as "the vital essence of a person that continued to need nourishment after death. Shown as a person's double" (229).

Mrs. Bunny says

Excellent introduction! Pinch structured the book well, with the first two sections split into longer chapters dealing with very important themes in Egyptian mythology (e.g. mythical time lines, etc). These should be read through before reading the last section, which is comprised of entries about different deities and lesser concepts. The book is well written in general, though I can see how someone could get bored if they read it all the way through. Given that I actually *did* read it through, I sometimes wished that she had just used the deities names instead of saying only the Distant Goddess or the Sun God, though I recognize her reasons for not doing so. There is also a very good list of additional sources in the back of the book as well!

Overall I am very pleased with the book, and I feel significantly more knowledgeable about Egyptian mythology.

Jennifer says

This is an excellent introduction to the mythology of Ancient Egypt. More than just an encyclopedia of gods and goddesses, this book takes a thematic approach and presents the major stories using major concepts (such as creation, death, morality, etc.). I found it very easy to get through and now feel ready to delve deeper into this subject (using the excellent resources listed in the book)!

Driss Sekkat says

In the Egyptian mythology Egyptians didn't just believed in one god, they believed in many gods. The most Egyptian god was Ra and Egyptians believed that Thoth was his secretary and counsellor. In the Egyptian mythology Thoth would stay next to Ra wherever he goes. Egyptians believed in about 2,000 gods but Ra was the god of the gods. A long time ago in Ancient Egypt, Egyptians believed that people were made out of clay. A fact Egyptians used to do was when they started preparing the body into a mummy the embalmer would pull the dead humans brain out from his nose using a long metal hook. In Egyptian mythology cats were known as sacred animals and Thoth, the secretary and counsellor of Ra has the best animal avatar, an ibis. Ra, the god of the gods was part in many myths and legends. There were many gods part of the Egyptian mythology but there were 12 important gods starting with Ra, after that Anubis, Horus, Thoth, Osiris, Isis, Seth, Sekhmet, Ptah, Hathor, and Nephthys. Finally, Egyptians also believed in reincarnation.

Egyptian Mythology and Greek mythology are actually a little bit familiar to each other. In every mythology both of them have a god of the gods which is Zeus and Ra. After that, they have 12 very important gods. In the Greek mythology it only has 13 god's but comparing to the Egyptians that's nothing because Egyptians have over 2,000 gods & goddesses. Both mythology's believed in the after life and have the same rules to enter the afterlife for example believing into gods and religion beliefs and traditions. As said in the first paragraph Egyptians did believe in reincarnation but Greeks did not believe in it. In Greek mythology cats were not sacred as animals but for Egyptians it did.

This book can be recommended for many types of grades level such as 6th to 9th grade because it is a very exciting book. It has been a long time since people did not read about Egyptians and it is actually very fun to read about them. This book can be recommended to many types of people also such as people that like to read about mythology and also fun gods. After that, if people read this book they would know more about ancient Egyptian History. Finally, people that are able to understand this book would never give it back to the library because they will love it and everyone would love the book "Egyptian Mythology".

Drew says

This books marks what I think is the end of my ancient Egypt kick, since the only books I have left on Egypt are a beginner's guide to translating hieroglyphics and a French artist's realizations of ancient sites/cities in their prime (and the book is in French). I'm not sure how useful reading hieroglyphics will be in everyday life, so the bits of it I studied are already fading. I'll have to keep learning French for awhile before I can tackle the other book, too.

Anyway, this book was a great finish to this mini obsession that lasted about 6 months. Having already absorbed stories, gods, and the end-to-end history of ancient Egypt, this book provided some much needed and welcome context.

The book starts with a (relatively) quick recap of 3,000 years of ancient Egyptian history, proving the story of the country and its ruling dynasties. But where it shone was in explaining longer-term shifts in ancient Egyptian beliefs, diving into cultural beliefs that contextualize religious practices, and in adding details about the Egyptian understanding of the world/cosmos.

After this rich opening section, the book becomes a catalogue of ancient Egyptian gods, myths, and religious beliefs. Even knowing a bit about Egyptian gods, I was excited to read the passages about my favorites, as each passage contained details that I hadn't seen or heard before.

I wish I'd started my little obsessive deep dive into ancient Egypt with this book. It's succinct, insightful, and down-to-earth, even when discussing creation myths and gods. Thoth himself would keep it on his shelf.

Adam says

This is a good reference work for studies in Ancient Egyptian mythology. Note, you won't find the literature represented here per se but rather you will be introduced to Ancient Egypt in general and their thought, cosmology & religion in particular. It begins with a short introduction to myth and Ancient Egyptian history. Then it proceeds to introduce the reader to how Ancient Egyptians conceived of their world both in terms of linear time and in terms of cyclical time. By far the largest portion of the book is an wonderful A to Z reference guide to the deities, themes, and concepts of Ancient Egyptian mythology. For the size, this little book is pretty comprehensive and will definitely be a useful resource for future Near Eastern studies.

Ayon Bit says

From my childhood, i am too much curious to Egypt. After Greek mythology, i was decided to read Egyptian Mythology. Excellent introduction! Pinch structured the book well, with the first two sections split into longer chapters dealing with very important themes in Egyptian mythology (e.g. mythical time lines, etc). This is a good reference work for Studies in Ancient Egyptian mythology.

Karime Cury says

Muchos datos interesantes (y sobre todo, útiles), y amena la escritura. La forma en que están divididos los capítulos, permite aprender la mitología desde diferentes ángulos. Definitivamente, queda añadido a mis pilares mitológicos para historias presentes y futuras.

John Anthony Smith says

In the first three chapters, author did a good job giving a simplistic but thorough view of the Egyptian ancient culture. In the fourth chapter, he did an incredible job bringing to life the different deities, their stories and relations with other deities. It was excellent book, which was very informative.
