



A Dictionary of Folklore (Facts on File Library of World Literature)

By David Pickering

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More than 1,000 A-to-Z entries emphasize the central themes and traditions of world folklore from ancient times to the present day. Entries include: -- Folkloric associations of superstitions, dreams, and myths -- Beliefs and remedies linked with herbs, birds, and animals -- Popular heroes and folkloric characters, including Charlemagne, Paul Bunyan, Don Juan, Hiawatha, and Merlin -- Fabulous beasts and beings, including dragons, elves, fairies, giants, and mermaids -- Customs, rituals, and festivals surrounding such events as birth, marriage, and death -- Folkloric origins of nursery rhymes, proverbs, and sayings.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Although this reference book admits to being somewhat Eurocentric, it does touch upon the folklore of Asian, African, South American, and Native American cultures as well. Pickering (Cassell Dictionary of Superstitions, Cassell Dictionary of Proverbs) provides succinct but informative entries (longer when the topic is more complex) on such subjects as herbal remedies, the superstitions connected with various gemstones, and the folklore associated with selected trees, plants, birds, and animals. He also covers the ritual tradition of holidays and festivals and the origins of proverbs and sayings. In addition, the dictionary mentions characters and heroes from selkies to Joe Magarac, fantasy beings such as sprites and pixies, and some urban myths. While making what the introduction calls only "modest" claims to comprehensiveness, this dictionary nonetheless pulls together disparate strands of information not always available in mythology sources. Cross references help locate material. Recommended for public and school libraries as a basic reference on folklore. *DKatherine Kaigler-Koenig, Ellis Sch., Pittsburgh*

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From Booklist

The objectives of this approximately 1,000-entry guide, first published in Great Britain as *The Cassell Dictionary of Folklore*, are to examine origins of beliefs, look at lives of famous characters, provide background on specific tales, and cover a wide range of subjects, from the mythology of real and magic creatures to rituals. Pickering has edited several other works on fable, proverbs, and superstitions.

The alphabetically arranged entries are readable and concisely written, with careful cross-referencing. They include "folk tales, festivals, customs, legendary heroes, old wives' tales, fabulous creatures, folk remedies, and other items of folkloric interest from many cultural traditions." Emphasis is on traditions of the British Isles, western Europe, and North America, but there is some coverage of Africa, India, South America, and other regions as well.

There is interesting material on plants, animals, and superstitions surrounding these, in entries such as *Beans*, *Bears*, *Pumpkin*, and *Robin*. However, the dictionary seems very conservative, and it lacks a daring leap into current facets of folklore, such as Clarissa Estes' work on the "wild woman archetype." There are entries on some urban legends and on UFOs, but more of these modern touches would have been helpful. Also, definitions of various forms of folklore are not consistently provided. There are entries for ballad, fairy tale, proverb, riddle, and saga but not epic, fable, myth, or tall tale, to name a few. A bibliography would have made the book more valuable for students.

Another one-volume work, *The Larousse Dictionary of World Folklore* [RBB F 1 96], includes brief information on prominent folklorists as well as a useful bibliography. The more comprehensive *Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend* (HarperCollins, 1984) is a standard reference source but has not been substantially revised since it first appeared in 1949^1950. Even with its omissions, *A Dictionary of Folklore* would be useful in high-school, public, and academic libraries needing a convenient handbook on the topic.

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Review

"....recommended for undergraduate and public libraries." -- *Choice Magazine*

"...a good basic reference, ideal for quick browsing...Recommended." -- *The Book Report*

"This book of folklore is a fun and informative read for anyone interested in the legends of the world..." --
VOYA, December 2000

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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Rachel Chaney:

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