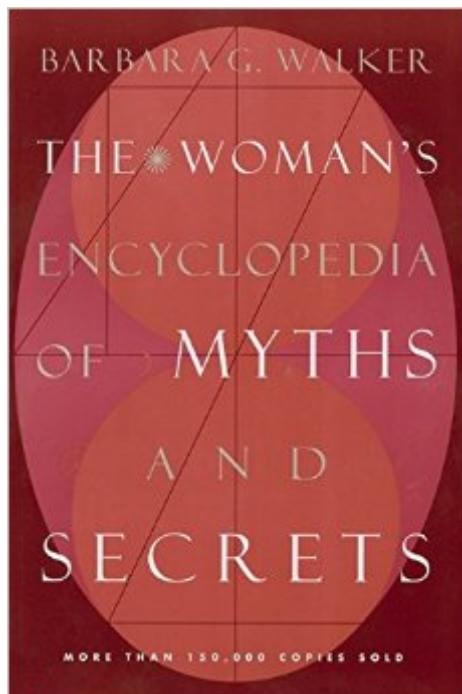


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The Woman's Encyclopedia Of Myths And Secrets



Synopsis

Do You Know...where the legend of a cat's nine lives comes from? why "mama" is a word understood in nearly all languages?how the custom of kissing began?whether there really was a female pope?why Cinderella's glass slipper was so important to the Prince? The answers to these and countless other intriguing questions are given in this compulsively readable, feminist encyclopedia. Twenty-five years in preparation, this unique, comprehensive sourcebook focuses on mythology anthropology, religion, and sexuality to uncover precisely what other encyclopedias leave out or misrepresent. The Woman's Encyclopedia presents the fascinating stories behind word origins, legends, superstitions, and customs. A browser's delight and an indispensable resource, it offers 1,350 entries on magic, witchcraft, fairies, elves, giants, goddesses, gods, and psychological anomalies such as demonic possession; the mystical meanings of sun, moon, earth, sea, time, and space; ideas of the soul, reincarnation, creation and doomsday; ancient and modern attitudes toward sex, prostitution, romance, rape, warfare, death and sin, and more. Tracing these concepts to their prepatriarchal origins, Barbara G. Walker explores a "thousand hidden pockets of history and custom in addition to the valuable material recovered by archaeologists, orientalists, and other scholars." Not only a compendium of fascinating lore and scholarship, The Woman's Encyclopedia is a revolutionary book that offers a rare opportunity for both women and men to see our cultural heritage in a fresh light, and draw upon the past for a more humane future.

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Customer Reviews

When Barbara Walker's *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets* was published, The Los Angeles Times called it a feminist-scholar's gold mine and a browser's delight. The San Francisco Chronicle called the book a mountain of scholarship, a vast mass of supremely documented material. The praise seems to be well-deserved. After all, Barbara Walker spent over twenty years researching the topic, distilling valuable information and deriving insights from hundreds of books and documents. I am therefore surprised at the very scathing criticisms of the book presented at the Readers' Reviews section of .com. To understand this, there are at least two possibilities. The first possibility is that the scholarship of the book is genuinely poor (and the LA Times and the San Francisco Chronicle reviewers did not do a professional job). Another possibility is that such negativity is a reflection of the unspeakable anger one feels when one's long-held beliefs and values are shaken. Certainly, the encyclopedia does not offer any orthodox or politically correct views. Barbara Walker is not a crowd-pleaser. She does not have too many complimentary things to say about patriarchy, Christianity or the Church. I see the primary value of this book as a bold and unabridged documentation of the historical struggle between the sexes and between the religion of Goddess and the patriarchal religions. Walker does not shy away from controversial or uncomfortable topics. She does not self-censor. She is not afraid to talk about the darker side of Christian history: its intolerance of other religions, its appropriation of pagan myths into Christian theology, its conversion of pagan festivals into Christian ones and its demonization of Goddess and sex. I have had the book for a few years now.

There are a lot of people who want to believe this book is an accurate source of information about mythology and history. Wishing does not make it so. Some of the reviewers claim that the only reason people say bad things about it is that they are trying to defend Christianity and are closed-minded because of their faith. I am an atheist and mythology scholar who has no faith to defend, and I still think this book is pure nonsense. It appears to me that Walker's supporters are the ones doing it out of faith and dogma and refusing to face facts. As others have pointed out, all you need to do is follow her footnotes. It may look impressive when she makes three statements in a paragraph and cites three references to back her up, but it's a lot less impressive when you actually have those books and they don't say at all what she claims they do. I've done it (I have a large library of mythology books), but so can you. Go to a library and pick a few to look up. You'll probably be shocked at the differences in what she claims those sources say and what they really do. The only ones that I have found so far that seem to be at all similar are a handful of others also

in the neo-pagan movement (Graves, Stone and Gimbutas being the main three). Here is just the highlights of a few of many errors in just one entry: "Mara Exceedingly ancient name of the Goddess-as-Crone" The first sentence isn't even done yet and already it's got the crone theory that she tries to push on everything (none of the figures of Mara have anything to do with crones) and capitalizes the term for religious purposes. And, to top it off, all but the relatively recent (last 500 years or so) references to characters named Mara say that Mara is a male figure, not female.

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