



A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology (Oxford Quick Reference)

By James MacKillop

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A comprehensive and accessible survey of one of the world's richest mythological traditions. It covers the people, themes, concepts, places, and creatures of Celtic mythology, saga, legend, and folklore from both ancient and modern traditions, in 4,000 entries ranging from brief definitions to short essays. An introductory essay explores the origins and identity of Celts, the history of the Celtic revival, and the meaning and role of mythology. An excellent source for those curious about the mystical myths of the Celts

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

The full richness of Celtic mythology, with legends, sagas, and folklore, with traditions, places, and personalities, are now evocatively yet concisely conveyed in James MacKillop's dictionary. The 4,000 entries include brief descriptions (such as the short explanation of Arthen, the bear-and-river god of early Wales) as well as extended stories of bloody vengeance (following actual or supposed treachery), romantic love, and frequent adultery, plus tales of mysterious monsters on lonely hillocks. From Deirdre and Cúchulainn to leprechauns, from Galahad, cauldrons, and archaeology to druids, MacKillop provides an impressive amount of lore and research in a reliable, browsable, and enjoyable dictionary. --Stephanie Gold

From [Booklist](#)

With the possible exceptions of the Arthurian legend and the saga of Tristan and Iseult, both of which can be traced to Celtic sources, the mythological world of the ancient Celts is not as familiar to most Americans as are the classical myths of Greece and Rome. This gap in our cultural literacy is unfortunate, for, as this dictionary reveals, the Celtic peoples developed a rich and fascinating tradition of legends and myths.

In compiling this volume, MacKillop, an English professor who specializes in Celtic studies, drew not only upon texts written in Irish and Welsh but also on Breton, Cornish, Manx, and Scottish Gaelic sources and traditions. In addition to gods and goddesses, heroes and heroines, creatures, and other mythological figures, the approximately 4,000 entries cover real and imaginary places, archaeological sites, animals and plants, narrative cycles, and ideas. Entries, which frequently include variant spellings and etymologies, vary in length from a single identifying phrase to more than four pages, but the majority are one or two paragraphs. Asterisks within the text of an article indicate those terms that are treated further in separate entries, and numerous cross-references guide the user from alternate titles, names, and spellings to the forms used by MacKillop. Supplementing the dictionary portion of the work are a general guide to pronunciation of the various Celtic languages and a 13-page bibliography of selected sources pertaining to Celtic literature and culture. Especially helpful is a topical index that classifies entries under 36 broad categories, such as concepts, games, literary forms, monsters, rituals and curses, and saints.

Although a number of dictionaries pertaining to Celtic myth have appeared in the last decade, none are as extensive as this work. For example, Peter Ellis' *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* [RBB Ag 92] and its companion volume, *Dictionary of Irish Mythology* [RBB N 1 89], were designed for lay readers and therefore have far fewer, and generally less-detailed, entries. With only about one-tenth the number of entries, Miranda Green's *Dictionary of Celtic Myth and Legend* [RBB Ap 15 92] lacks the breadth of coverage of this work, but it is important for its illustrations and its links to archaeological evidence and to literary sources. Since each of these earlier works has unique entries or features, this new compendium does not supersede them but rather complements them by offering a more comprehensive approach.

Supplementing the coverage of both *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* [RBB Ap 15 96] and *The Oxford Companion to the Literature of Wales* (Oxford, 1990), this scholarly dictionary should be a valuable addition to academic and large public libraries.

Review

'Review from previous edition This definitive reference guide to all things Celtic . . . reveals an ancient world full of treachery, bloody vengeance, kingship, and fearsome monsters at crossroads.'

Catholic Times

'A brilliant, detailed, and authoritative guide to wonderful legends, mighty heroes, lost cities, and timeless stories of love, revenge, nobility, and treachery. The perfect introduction to a vibrant people.'

Bristol Evening Post

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Janet Roldan:

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