



A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake: Unlocking James Joyce's Masterwork

By Joseph Campbell, Henry Morton Robinson

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Since its publication in 1939, countless would-be readers of Finnegans Wake — James Joyce's masterwork that consumed a third of his life — have given up after a few pages and dismissed it as a "perverse triumph of the unintelligible." In 1944, a young professor of mythology and literature named Joseph Campbell, working with Henry Morton Robinson, wrote the first "key" or guide to entering the fascinating, disturbing, marvelously rich world of Finnegans Wake. The authors break down Joyce's "unintelligible" book page by page, stripping the text of much of its obscurity and serving up thoughtful interpretations via footnotes and bracketed commentary. A Skeleton Key was Campbell's first book, published five years before he wrote his breakthrough *Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Campbell and Robinson deserve a citation from the Republic of Letters for having succeeded in bringing out their Skeleton Key at this time....The chance to be among the first to explore the wonders of *Finnegans Wake* is one of the few great intellectual and aesthetic treats that these last bad years have yielded.”

— **Edmund Wilson**, *The New Yorker*

“Joyce has found in Mr. Campbell and Mr. Robinson the ideal readers who approach his book with piety, passion, and intelligence, and who have devoted several years to fashioning the key that will open its treasures.”

— **Max Lerner**, *The New York Times*

"The key that will open [*Finnegans Wake's*] treasures." — *The New York Times*

About the Author

Perhaps most responsible for bringing mythology to a mass audience, Joseph Campbell's works rank among the classics in mythology and literature: *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, the four-volume *The Masks of God*, *The Power of Myth* with Bill Moyers, and many others. Among his many awards, Campbell received the National Institute of Arts and Letters Award for Contribution to Creative Literature and the 1985 Medal of Honor for Literature from the National Arts Club. A past president of the American Society for the Study of Religion, Campbell was professor emeritus at Sarah Lawrence College in New York until his death in 1987.

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