

Ben Gutenberg

I wolfed down my breakfast. The bus ride to the third grade seemed an eternity and I rushed to my classroom unwilling to wait another second for Reading Day to begin. I had a brand new book to read, The Lost Years of Merlin, and we were going to read all day! I knew next to nothing about the book, only the cryptic teaser revealed on the inside sleeve, yet I was entranced by the prospect of unveiling its secrets. I was well rewarded; not only was it an excellent fantasy novel, it was absolutely drenched in mythical references. Filled with giants, magic and mystery, the book was all I hoped.

In third grade I devoured myths and legends; I read every book on Greek mythology I could find. But I didn't limit myself to Greek, I read Norse, Native American and other myths. My passion for myths influences me even to this day. This summer I read Bram Stoker's Dracula. The words just flew off the page and I finally appreciated why the book so greatly influenced the genre. Not only does it define the vampire as a fantasy villain, but the plot is riveting and the cast colorful. It reminds me of the joy I felt when I stayed up to 3:00 in morning finishing The Hobbit. I love that Tolkien, dissatisfied with England's mythology, created his own. His mythology was filled with virtuous heroes and vile villains.

Mythical heroes use their extraordinary talents to shape the world in which they live, often for the better. They muster the resources required to vanquish their foes and solve their troubles. The mystique of the hero and legendary figures who achieve great things fascinate me, mostly because I admire and appreciate their achievements. As a fencer knowing the difficulties of mastering a blade, I can appreciate a character's struggle to become a skilled swordsman. The talents of multi-lingual characters and

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those who master arcane and eldritch lore appeal to me partly because I hope to attain such influence.

Legendary heroes, like Thor or Heracles, would know what to do about modern tragedies such as genocide or injustice. They were decisive, able to thrust reservations aside and do what they must. These legendary figures expunged their tribulations with actions, confronting them unswervingly, sometimes resorting to guile. They adhered to a strong moral code. These and other figures personified the qualities society held as ideal and combated those worthy of scorn.

Like these heroes I hold the qualities of nobility, bravery and justice in esteem and disdain jealousy, hate and dishonor. My morals have been shaped by the myths and legends of great heroes. Mythology has implanted in me a desire to make the world better, to do all I can to live up to the ideals set by the heroes of old. I believe the college environment will help refine my sense of justice and form my actions to improve the world as my literary heroes do.