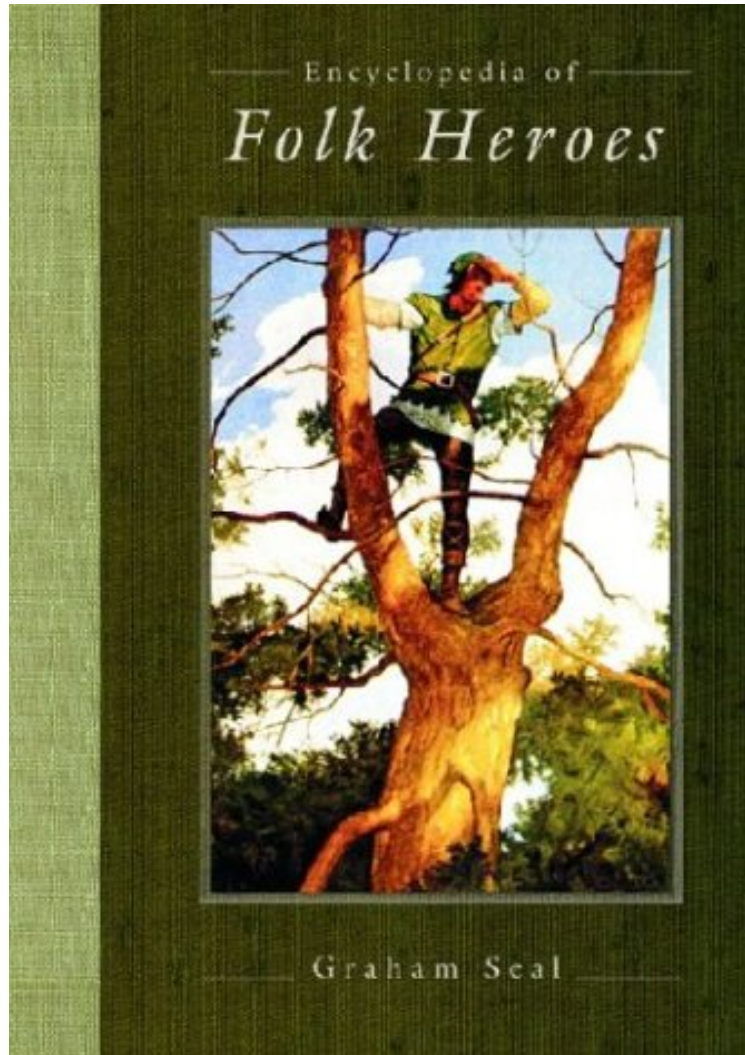


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## Encyclopedia of Folk Heroes

*Graham Seal*

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**Graham Seal : Encyclopedia of Folk Heroes** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Encyclopedia of Folk Heroes:

A wide-ranging and detailed investigation of folk heroes, both fictional and historical, from the earliest times to the present, taken from societies throughout the world as they exist in folktales, folksongs, customs, speech, and other folklore genres. Spotlights 366 folk heroes, from old acquaintances like Bluebeard and Casey Jones to new friends like Bunuwas and Chokanamma Includes 51 illustrationspaintings, drawings, and photographs A timeline documents the earliest known appearance of each hero A general index combined with indexes by heroic type and by country/culture

make research easy

From School Library Journal Grade 9 Up—This volume describes folk heroes from all times and cultures, both individually and as groups ("Magicians," "Occupational Heroes," etc.). There are indexes by heroic type, country/culture, and a chronology of folk heroes by century, in addition to a general index and a detailed bibliography. Each entry includes cross-references and citations. Black-and-white illustrations are scattered throughout. Seal states up front that his book is selective; he emphasizes folklore and fairy tales, and doesn't include characters from mythology, scripture, or literature (although he does treat larger-than-life historical figures who've passed into folklore, such as Napoleon Bonaparte, George Washington, and a whole host of outlaws). Unfortunately, the book has flaws, most relating to the way the entries are written. They vary considerably in content. Some explain the background, some give a historical treatment, some analyze customs and traditions, while others delve into psychology. Some articles use quotes from scholars, rhymes, or songs. Some quickly summarize the stories, others include retellings in excruciating detail. As a result, the entries are inconsistent in substance, length, and value. While this volume can be interesting and informative, it can also be puzzling and frustrating, depending on a subject's treatment.

Ann W. Moore, Schenectady County Public Library, NY Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Seal (Curtin Univ. of Technology, Perth, Australia) compiles a selection of folk heroes from cultures around the world, concentrating on those from "authenticated folk traditions." A strong introduction defines the attributes, qualities, and origins of a folk hero as well as cultural and communal interpretations of heroism. Organized alphabetically by name, the encyclopedia also includes group entries such as occupational heroes, outlaws, giant-killers, and local heroes. Each entry is followed by references and related pieces, and the volume is indexed by both heroic type and country/culture. Also included is a chronology of folk heroes and an extensive bibliography. One minor criticism is that minor heroes may be difficult to locate; for example, Joe Magarac, a steel workers' folk hero, appears under occupational heroes but is listed in neither the general index nor under the heading "Occupational Heroes" in the "Index of Heroic Types," though he is in the chronology under 20th-century heroes. Nevertheless, this entertaining and wide-ranging work is a valuable addition to most libraries.

DKatherine K. Koenig, Ellis Sch., Pittsburgh Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Seal (of the Curtin University of Technology in Perth, Australia) has put together an interesting if sporadic collection of folk heroes. He refers to it as a "representative collection of legendary, historical, and magical heroes from many of the world's extensive folklores." South and Central America receive very little coverage. Polynesia and Melanesia are barely covered. Europe, North America, China, Japan, and select parts of Africa are covered, as are both settler and Aboriginal Australia. After a long introduction that surveys both the nature of the folk hero and the author's criteria for inclusion and exclusion, the work itself is in alphabetical order. There are liberal see references between variant forms of names. Entries range from a paragraph to several two-columned pages (e.g., Culture heroes; James, Jesse; Snow White). Each entry has a list of related entries and a list of references and further reading. Black-and-white illustrations are scattered throughout the text. Folk heroes are those "who have received celebration in one or more forms of folkloric expression and practice—in folktales, folk songs, folk customs, folk speech, and the other informal genres of everyday life." They include real people whose lives were large enough to have a fantastic component to them, like Davy Crockett, or whose deaths made publicity machines crank out stories about them, like Ned Kelly. Outlaws, tricksters, heroes and heroines of fairy tales and story cycles, numbskulls, and monsters are included. There are some puzzling assertions. In the Heroes of struggle entry, Helen Gurley Brown is identified as an "occupational" hero from American labor lore, along with Joe Hill. Following the entries are an "Index of Heroic Types," a "Country/Culture Index," and a "Chronology of Folk Heroes" as well as a general index. There is an extensive bibliography besides the references given at the end of each entry. Although many of the same topics are covered in other reference books on folklore, Encyclopedia of Folk Heroes includes a number of figures not easily found elsewhere. Larger public and academic libraries with folklore collections may find it useful. RBBCopyright American Library Association. All rights reserved