

## *Hit or Myth I™*

### **Because Myth Matters.**

Hello there, Player! I'm Arthur Q. Pebbleton, the fellow responsible for the game you're about to play. You can call me Artie! Welcome to *Hit or Myth*.

The game you are about to play is not just a game. It is also a map, a guide to that misty, ancient country we call Myth. In playing this game, in reading this map, I encourage you to follow up and do your own exploring of this country: Myth's a big place, and there are a lot of little hamlets\*, lively boroughs, and silver kingdoms we don't cover. This game is an introduction to some, but not all, of the mythic cultures of Western Civilization. There's so much out there to learn and see, so much story to steep yourself in – but for a start, I think this game will do quite nicely.

Let's break down what a *myth* is: a myth is a story, popular among a specific culture, that explains why things are the way they are, usually because of decisions made by legendary gods or people in the distant past. This game will familiarize you with some of the key figures in four different mythic groupings: Greek, Egyptian, Norse, and American mythology. “But wait,” you're saying. “Americans don't have myths.” Don't we? Don't Native Americans have creation myths? Didn't immigrants and slaves bring their stories from the Old World? Don't we believe in aliens? Didn't George Washington chop down that cherry tree? Of course they did. Of course we do. Of course he didn't.

But why is this important? Why does it matter what a bunch of dead people believed? Well, sheesh – you could make the same argument about the U.S. Constitution; it's only a document written by people 300 years ago. Here's why: myths sustain us. They bind a society as surely as the rule of law. These stories enter our language: when's the last time you heard a talking head on TV label a complicated policy proposal as “labyrinthine”, or that a frank discussion of racial politics in the United States would open up “a Pandora's Box” of other issues? We can't use these metaphors correctly if we don't know their history – and their history lies in myth.

The Egyptians were building cities and constructing elaborate rituals around their embalmed dead *thousands of years* before the rise of Classical Greece. Remember: contemporary folk – you and I! – are as far distant in time from Aristotle as *he* was to the building of the Pyramids. Egypt's complex and entrancing mythology sings to us across five thousand years of history – want proof? Why is the Washington Monument an Egyptian obelisk? Because they were symbols of power then, emblems laid at the feet of dead kings – and they are symbols of power now.

The Greeks are the progenitors\*\* of democracy, having pretty much invented the basis of our system of government in Athens around the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The Romans adopted the Greek religious system when they conquered Greece about 350 years later in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BCE, and soon the gods of

Athens, Thrace, and Sparta had spread across all of Western Europe. Then came Christianity, which spread over all of Europe just as quickly.

Well. Faster in some places than others. In the frost-kissed climes of Scandinavia and Germanic Europe, belief in the Norse gods – the *Aesir* – persisted well into the 13<sup>th</sup> century CE. A civilization of tough-as-nails people flourished up there; huddled together in their homes, telling stories around the fireplace as the wind howled outside, these people told stories of bravery, romance, and deceit. They were the Vikings, and we owe the development of English, in no small part, to them. Yep! Repeated Viking invasions of Anglo-Saxon England shaped our language like blows from an axe.

The emblems of Egypt, the democracy of Greece and the republic of Rome, and the language forged by Viking conquest came together in the people of England, who colonized the North American continent. On that continent, the stories of native people, slaves, and immigrants mingled to make something beautiful and unique, but somehow familiar. Those stories are American stories. Some are true, some are based on kernels of truth, and some are big fat lies, but all of them are American, and all of them are ours.

Our cultures are drenched with myth. The writing of Shakespeare is so crowded with allusions to Greek myth that you can hardly swing a sonnet without hitting one. An understanding of Egyptian myth lends us insights into one of the oldest civilizations in history. Comprehending the importance of Norse myth, how it generated its own version of Romantic Nationalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, how it inspired some of the greatest works of the West, and how it was later, and regrettably, harnessed to the Nazi war machine, is essential to understanding the last 150 years of Western European history.

I wish you good luck, good leisure, and good learning. Enjoy Hit or Myth!

Yours in learning,

Artie

\* A *hamlet* is a little town.

\*\* The *progenitors* of an idea or system, from the Greek *pro-*, meaning *first*, and *gen-*, meaning *birth*, are the first people to come up with it.

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NB\*: Some of the names and concepts in this game are difficult to say. Don't despair; there are pronunciation guides on every card. At LeftSide-RightSide, we use the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) as a pronunciation system, as well as our own house style. Explanations for why our style is the way it is can be found at our website, [www.LeftSide-RightSide.com](http://www.LeftSide-RightSide.com).

\*NB is short for *nota bene*, which means *note well* in Latin.

### ***Game Overview***

*Hit or Myth*<sup>TM</sup> is a game that builds cultural knowledge by familiarizing you with the gods and goddesses of antiquity, as well as our nation's recent past. The game consists of 52 Challenge cards. Each card has one Primary Challenge and one Bonus Challenge, which you and other players answer correctly to earn points; there's also a Conversation Starter on each card for further enrichment. Each Primary Challenge answer is worth two points and each Bonus Challenge answer is worth one point.

***The first player to reach 10 points wins!***

Remember: Our game emphasizes learning, not knowing. Don't be discouraged if you get stumped – take heart! The next time you see that card, you'll know the answer. Play, learn, *know*. And, for goodness' sake, have **fun**.

### **What's in the Box?**

- 52 Challenge Cards, each featuring one Primary Challenge, one Bonus Question, and one conversation starter on the card front, and answers to the Primary Challenge and Bonus Question on the card back

Each section has a different title, and a differently-named conversation-starter section, but each section works the exact same way.

- **Freaks and Greeks:** these challenges are all about the ancient Greek Pantheon; the conversation starter for this section is called **Lost in the Blabyrinth**, referencing the twisty Labyrinth of King Minos.
- **Mummy's the Word:** these challenges are all about the ancient Egyptian gods; the conversation starter for this section is called **Food for Thoth**, referencing Thoth, the god of knowledge.
- **How the West Was Fun:** these challenges are all about the varied influences in American folklore; the conversation starter for this section is called **Chuckwagon Chatter**, referencing dinner conversation made by cowboys.
- **Norsed Back to Health:** these challenges are all about the ancient Norse gods; the conversation starter for this section is called **For Your Eddafication**, referencing the Eddas, the ancient collections of Norse stories.

- This Instructions Booklet

- Artie's Quick and Dirty Reference Card- In the course of playing *Hit or Myth*, you'll come across many unfamiliar terms and phrases. All of them are defined, but many are used far too often to merit a definition on every single card; we've included a handy glossary card for quick reference, in case you get confused.

## How to Play

### For Two or More Individual Players or Teams

1. Shuffle the deck and put the cards down with the Challenge side face up.
2. Pick one person to be the Reader for each round. (Whoever has the closest birthday is the first Reader.) Everyone else is a Player. A round is complete when both the Primary and Bonus Challenges are answered correctly, or when all the Players are stumped.
3. Game play proceeds clockwise from the Reader.
4. **Standard Play:** The Reader takes a card from the top of the deck and reads the Primary Challenge out loud. Then the Reader flips the card over and reads the three multiple choice possibilities out loud. Only the Reader may see the card. The first Player to shout out the correct Primary Challenge multiple choice answer (**in bold letters** on the card back) wins two points. Or if you prefer, you may answer starting clockwise from the Reader. The Reader then reads the Bonus Challenge out loud; the first Player to answer *that* correctly wins a single point (the correct answer is **in bold letters** on the back of the card).
5. To prevent an unfair buildup of points, the Player who correctly answered the Primary Challenge can't answer the Bonus Challenge until the next round. If no Player can answer the Primary Challenge, no points are awarded and the Reader simply reads the answer out loud and places the card at the bottom of the deck. The round is over and the Player to the Reader's left becomes the new Reader. The same thing happens if nobody can answer the Bonus Challenge.
6. Once the Primary and Bonus Challenges have been correctly answered, the Reader may choose to read the conversation starter out loud, which is optional and earns no points, but is lovely for parties.
7. The Player clockwise to the Reader becomes the new Reader and a new round begins.
8. The first Player or Team to earn ten points wins the game.
9. **Advanced Play:** Advanced Play is identical to Standard Play, except the Reader **does not read the multiple choice answers for the Primary Challenge out loud**. The Players must supply the correct folkloric figure or god without any assistance. The Reader may read the multiple choice answers out loud if the Players become stuck. The rest of the round proceeds exactly as it does in Standard Play.

### Game Play Variations

**Open-Faced Sandwich:** The Reader draws a card and places it on the table, Challenge-side up, so all the Players can see. Whoever shouts out the correct answer first wins the points.

**Pass The Buck:** After reading each Primary Challenge, the Reader passes the card around the table; each Player has 10 seconds in which to answer the Challenge correctly out loud. The other Players are encouraged to count down together, and loudly, but not in the Player's ear, please.

### Single Player

Play against yourself and be your own Reader. Read the cards to yourself and work through the Primary Challenges and Bonus Challenges. (Look at just the answer to each Challenge as you play, 'cause you're on the honor system here!)

Feel free to read them out loud, and even use a different voice for The Reader and The Player. Who cares? You're alone. What, you think I haven't done it?!

See how many points you can rack up without getting a card incorrect. How many points did you win before you got stumped?

*Once you understand how the game works, the possibilities for play are endless. If you come up with a new idea for game play, please e-mail it to us; if we like it, we'll post it on our website, credit your ingenuity, and send you a free game to boot!*

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