



# On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History

*Thomas Carlyle*

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On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History is a book that is a collection of six famous lectures given in May 1840.

1. (5 May) The Hero as Divinity. Odin. Paganism: Scandinavian Mythology
2. (8 May) The Hero as Prophet. Muhammad: Islam
3. (12 May) The Hero as Poet. Dante; Shakespeare
4. (15 May) The Hero as Priest. Luther; Reformation: Knox; Puritanism
5. (19 May) The Hero as Man of Letters. Johnson, Rousseau, Burns
6. (22 May) The Hero as King. Cromwell. Napoleon: Modern Revolutionism

Thomas Carlyle was a Scottish philosopher, satirical writer, essayist, historian and teacher during the Victorian era. He called economics "the dismal science", wrote articles for the Edinburgh Encyclopedia, and became a controversial social commentator.

His belief in the importance of heroic leadership found form in this book, in which he compared a wide range of different types of heroes, including Odin, Muhammad, Oliver Cromwell, Napoleon, William Shakespeare, Dante, Samuel Johnson, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Robert Burns, John Knox, and Martin Luther. These lectures of Carlyle's are regarded as an early and powerful formulation of the Great Man theory.

This book is based on a course of lectures he had given. The French Revolution had brought Carlyle fame, but little money. His friends worked to set him on his feet by organizing courses of public lectures for him, drumming up an audience and selling guinea tickets. Carlyle did not like lecturing, but found that he could do it, and more importantly that it brought in some much-needed money. Between 1837 and 1840, Carlyle delivered four such courses of lectures. The final course was on "Heroes." From the notes he had prepared for this course, he wrote out his book, reproducing the curious effects of the spoken discourses.

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