

Name _____ Examining Belief I: Myth and Message
Bronislaw Malinowski from Myth in Primitive Psychology (1926) Vocab.
Melanesian: Melanesia Is a series of Pacific Islands.

monotony: boredom

rhapsodies: beautiful pieces of music

catholic: universal, all-embracing

anthropologist: a social scientist who studies humans and their cultures

humanist: one who is optimistic about human beings and their accomplishments; one who focuses on the works of man rather than the works of god.

Sir James Frazer: The author of The Golden Bough, an early application of anthropology to the Classical world. He was particularly interested in fertility gods and how similar they were across the world.

pragmatic: practical

loquacity: the quality of easy speech.

epistemologist: one who studies how we know what we know

exegesis: critical explanation of a text

archipelagoes: island chains

prima facie: on the surface, seemingly, at first glance

etiological: explaining something's origins

taboo: a societal or group rule preventing something, such as incest.

totem: a natural symbol for a group

casuistry: clever but false reasoning

autochthonous: arising from the earth

matrilineal: a society that traces decent and inheritance through the mother's line.

patrilocal: a society in which married couples live with the groom's family.

anomalous: different, odd

facile: easy

ad hoc: set up to deal with a specific purpose, like an ad hoc committee

fidelity: truth, loyalty, honesty

primeval: ancient

endogamous: a social group that practices marriage within the group

indigenous: native

transience: temporary, moving from place to place

coeval: existing at the same time, of the same age

empirical: based on observation or experiment, not on theory

sui generis: unique, not like others

fallacious: false, incorrect

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Take neat, careful notes with page numbers noted.

1. * What is the basic thesis of Malinowski's essay? (Note the strong thesis statement.)

2. Describe the position of the "school of Nature mythology":

3. What is Malinowski's attitude toward this school's ideas and why?

4. What is the position of the "Historical school," and how does Malinowski assess it?

5. * What is the position on myth of figures like Wundt, Durkheim, Harrison and Frazer?

6. What does Malinowski say is the advantage of the anthropologist in studying myths?

7. * What does Malinowski say about the role of myths? Answer completely.

8. What are the main differences between folk tales (kukwanebu) and legends (libwogwo)?

9.* How are myths (liliu) different than the previous two categories?

10. How does Malinowski feel about Burne and Myres's theory of the etiological function of myth?

Bronislaw Malinowski from Myth in Primitive Psychology (1926) pp. 111 - 148

II. Myths of Origin

1. What is the main function of the Trobriand myth of emergence at the hole of Laba'i?
2. For what sorts of purposes is the testimony of myth recognized in Trobriand villages?
3. What happens when there is a permanent disruption to conditions fundamental to a myth?
4. Why would one encounter differences in the same myth in different parts of the country?
5. To what extent does Malinowski claim that myths can be used to reconstruct history? Explain.

III. 1. How are primeval people and today's dead similar in Trobriand myth?

2. To what Biblical story is the skin sloughing myth related? How?

3. How does Malinowski summarize the role of myth with regard to death, illness and spirits?

4. What does Malinowski say is the function of magic, and how is myth related to it?

5. What is Malinowski's final recapitulation of the function of myth?