



Legends of the World

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Legends are stories that spring from the collective consciousness of a people -- no one writer ever invented the adventures of Robin Hood, the fanciful tales of the Buddha's childhood, or the exploits of the Aboriginal outlaw Yagan. Although legends have their roots in undefined history, and are shaped by constant telling and retelling, they become legends only after the facts have been transformed by the popular imagination, when real people become magical beasts, demons, or men with supernatural powers. Here are the most important, most popular, and most curious legends from each of the five continents, and from sophisticated and primitive cultures alike, have been chosen by thirty-four experts. These writers relate the cultural context of each legend. The authors also describe the effects these stories had on the people who first heard them. And they trace, where appropriate, the legends' distant origins recorded events and characters. A comparative survey charts the recurring themes and motifs, providing a fascinating account of how the same legend, with minor variations, appears in many different parts of the world. The fine pen-and-ink drawings by the distinguished artist Eric Fraser evoke the magical quality of these timeless stories. Richard Cavendish, the General Editor, was also the General Editor of the multi-volume encyclopedia "Man, Myth and Magic" and "The Encyclopedia of the Unexplained". He is the author of several books on religion and the occult, including "Visions of Hell" and "King Arthur and the Grail".

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