Book summary

Viral Mythology

By Marie D. Jones and Larry Flaxman

LONG BEFORE we had the Internet, YouTube and Facebook, ideas and knowledge went viral through storytelling, the use of art, and architecture. Long before we had the ability to fire off a text via cell phone, or email a news item and watch it go "viral" across the globe in a matter of minutes, our ancient ancestors had their own ways of encoding and transmitting important information that would stand the test of time.

Viral Mythology explores how ancient civilizations and cultures relied on various means of spreading information within the context of their stories, oral traditions, religious texts, cave and rock art, pottery, paintings and even their monuments, edifices and holy and sacred sites.

Today, we are left with the task of looking back in time to see just what was important to the cultures of the past, and how they influence our understanding of who we are, where we came from, and what our place may be in the world. By examining the origin stories, myths and even fairy tales of the past, we come to find deep truths embedded within the fantastical. By looking at the images and symbols etched into stone and on cave walls, and the more sophisticated art of later eras, we come to understand what our ancestors revered and worshipped. By exploring the ruins of pyramids, henges, monuments, temples and churches of old, we open the door to discover what our ancestors believed in and how they viewed their place in the cosmos.

Viral Mythology speaks to our present, and our future, by looking at what information was deemed important enough to be passed down to our generations, to be discovered and uncovered in the layers of earth and history. It also speaks to the scientific understanding of our ancestors, in clues embedded in their stories and art and buildings that allow us to see how close they lived with the natural world, and how well they understood its inner workings, even if they lacked the scientific acumen to describe it that we have today.

We can come to fully understand who we are by looking at how ideas and information goes viral today, and apply it to the past, to realize that ideas and knowledge always find a way to stand up to time. The *Viral Mythology* of the past is our present, and we are now creating the *Viral Mythology* that will define us to future generations.