Northrop Frye
Myth, Fiction, and Displacement
Daedalus, Summer 1961, pp. 587-605

Start from "world mediated by meaning" and "world constituted
by meaning"; latter subdivides into individual and common, with
initiative in individual and effectiveness when it has become common;
also into earlier, in facto esse, present, in fieri, ideal in idea
and perhaps·future.

597   "By a myth... I mean primarily a certain type of story."

587   Story: sequence of events or scenes linked successively by
588   the "persuasion of continuity", "the power that keeps us
       turning the pages of a novel and that holds us in our seats
at the theatre."
       Not the outline or summary of the story as a whole, but
the connectedness of successive parts that sustains interest,
that inveigles us into to grant attention to surrender to author

       This building up, sustaining, and resolution of interest
set up an exigence for inner structure
       something demanded by the story as such, something
independent of the way things really happen in real life
593   Hence the removal of the requirement of credibility results
in highly conventionalized art: characters and events are functions
of the structure.

598   "Like art, and unlike science, it (myth) deals, not with
       the world man contemplates, but with the world that man
creates."
       "We have creation myths, fall and flood myths, metamorphosis
and dying-god myths, divine-marriage and hero-ancestry myths,
etiological myths, apocalyptic myths, and writers of sacred
scriptures and collectors of myths like Ovid tend to arrange
these in series."
       Myths form a mythology. ".. myths show an odd tendency
to stick together and build up bigger structures." ".. they seem
to provide a kind of containing form of tradition...."
599   "And every developed mythology tends to complete itself, to
       outline an entire universe in which the "gods" represent
the whole*nature in humanized form, and at the same time show
in perspective man's origin, his destiny, the limits of his power,
and the extension of his hopes and desires. A mythology may develop
by accretion,as in Greece, or by rigorous codifying and the excluding
of unwanted material, as in Israel; but the drive toward a verbal
circumference of human experience is clear in both cultures."
       "When a system of myths loses all connexion with belief,
it becomes purely literary, as Classical myth did in Christian
Europe."
600   "Myth thus provides the main outlines and the circumference of
       a verbal universe which is later occupied by literature as well
Literature is more flexible than myth, and fills up the universe
more completely... But in all cultures mythology merges insensibly
into, and with, literature."

604   "We find it hard to conceive of literature as an order of
       words, as a unified imaginative system that can be studied as
a whole by criticism. If we had such a conception, we could readily
see that literature as a whole provides a framework or context for
every work of literature, just as a fully developed mythology PTO

*of

provides a framework or context for each of its myths.
Further, because mythology and literature occupy the same verbal
space, so to speak, the framework or context of every work of
literature can be found in mythology as well, when its
literary tradition is understood.... Putting works of
literature into such a context gives them an immense
reverberating dimension of significance...T This reverberating
significance, in which every literary work catches the echoes of all
other works of its type of literature, and so ripples out into the
rest of literature and thence into life....