

Topic Page: [Frye, Northrop](#)

Summary Article: **Frye, (Herman) Northrop (1912–1991)**

from *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Canadian literary critic and editor. His chief concerns were with the role and practice of criticism and the relationship between literature and society. He achieved international recognition for his literary theories, expounded in his study of William Blake, *Fearful Symmetry* (1947), also seen in his grammar of mythic form, *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), and his study of the Bible's symbolism, *The Great Code* (1982). Later publications include *Words with Power* (1990) and *The Double Vision* (1991).

From the 1960s on, Frye used public lectures and the media to extend education in mythology to a wider audience, campaigning relentlessly to demystify criticism and to bring it to the largest possible number of people. The lectures in *The Educated Imagination* (1963) were first delivered as Canadian Broadcasting Corporation radio lectures. Frye also served as a member of the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunication Commission (1968–77), the regulatory and policy-making body for broadcasting. His *Words with Power* (1990) is a companion to *The Great Code* and also something of a successor to the much earlier *Anatomy of Criticism*. His last publication, *The Double Vision* (1991), consists of reworkings of public lectures in which he presents a shorter and more accessible version of *The Great Code* and *Words with Power*.

Born in Sherbrooke, Quebec, SE Canada, Frye studied English and philosophy at Victoria College, University of Toronto, and then, after studying theology, was ordained a minister in the United Church of Canada in 1936. In 1939 he was appointed to the Department of English in Victoria College, where he subsequently served as chair, then as principal, and finally in 1978 as chancellor of Victoria University. In 1967 he became the first university professor of the University of Toronto, a position he held until his death.

quotations

Frye, (Herman) Northrop

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