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## Carl jung red book synopsis

Jung described the process that led to the creation of the Red Book as "my most difficult experiment." He was referring to his sustained response to a series of "assaults" from his unconscious that he feared might overwhelm him. These experiences began after Jung's break with Sigmund Freud. Jung recorded them in a series of notebooks that he later used as the basis for the Red Book. As he recalled in the autobiographical Memories, Dreams, Reflections: "An incessant stream of fantasies had been released . . . I stood helpless before an alien world; everything in it seemed difficult and incomprehensible." Amidst this psychic turmoil, Jung resolved to "find the meaning in what I was experiencing in these fantasies"—a process that required him both to engage with and distance himself from their effect—and to describe, comprehend, and transform them for a constructive purpose. The material in the Red Book came from Jung's exploration of his unconscious and his encounters with the works of many cultural figures, including the pioneering American philosopher and psychologist William James (1842–1910). The format of the Red Book resembles the work of the British poet and painter William Blake (1757–1827), who also recorded dreams and visions in combined text and images and with whose work Jung had some familiarity. Jung maintained that the experiences described in the Red Book were the foundations of the distinctive theories of his analytical psychology, saying, "All my works, all my creative activity, has come from those initial fantasies and dreams which began in 1912." As Jung refined his analytical methods, he developed the themes he first explored in the Red Book through study of Eastern and Western religions, psychological phenomena without scientific explanation, mythology, alchemy and physics, and the dreams of contemporary women and men. Experts have noted similarities between the way Jung integrated texts and illustrations in the Red Book and the work of British poet, painter, and printmaker William Blake (1757-1827). Jung knew Blake's works well and included two of them—one depicting a scene from Dante's *Inferno*, the other Jacob's Ladder—in his *Psychologie und Alchemie* (Psychology and Alchemy, 1944). Jung wrote that he found "Blake a tantalizing study, since he compiled a lot of half or undigested knowledge in his fantasies. According to my ideas they are an artistic production rather than an authentic representation of unconscious processes." Blake illustrated this edition of *Night Thoughts* (1742-1745 ), a popular poem by Edward Young (1681-1765). Bookmark this item: [//www.loc.gov/exhibits/red-book-of-carl-jung/the-red-book-and-beyond.html#obj0](#) This eighteenth-century Chinese book, which Jung described as a Taoist-alchemical tract, had a major influence on his mature thinking. In 1928 he received a German translation from Richard Wilhelm (1873-1930), a distinguished German sinologist. In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* Jung states that "light on the nature of alchemy began to come to me only after I had read the text of the *Golden Flower*." Jung's intense study of alchemy subsequently occupied him to such an extent that he discontinued work on the Red Book. At Wilhelm's request, Jung wrote a commentary on the *Secret of the Golden Flower*, which forms the preface of the book. Enlarge Lu Dongbin. *Das Geheimnis der Goldenen Blüte: ein chinesisches Lebensbuch.* (The Secret of the Golden Flower: A Chinese Book of Life). Translated and explained by Richard Wilhelm; commentary by C. G. Jung. Munich: DornVerlag Grete Ullmann, 1929. General Collections, Library of Congress (036.00.00). [Digital ID # rb0036] Bookmark this item: [//www.loc.gov/exhibits/red-book-of-carl-jung/the-red-book-and-beyond.html#obj1](#) Rather than interpreting alchemy as literally concerned with changing lesser metals into gold, Jung considered it a symbolic representation of the individuation process. Images in Medieval and Renaissance alchemy texts provided him with further validation of his theories regarding the universality of symbols. In the foreword to his *Psychology and Alchemy*, he wrote, "What the written word could express only imperfectly, or not at all, the alchemist compressed into his images." In the 1953 edition of the book, Jung included this engraving by English physician and mystical philosopher Robert Fludd (1574-1637), with Jung's caption "the anima mundi [soul of the world], guide of Mankind, herself guided by God." Enlarge Robert Fludd. *Utriusque cosmi maioris scilicet et minoris metaphysica, physica atque technica historia, in duo volumnia secundum cosmi differentiam diuisa, vol. I.* Frankfurt: J. T. Bry. 1624. Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress (014.00.00). [Digital ID # rb0014] Bookmark this item: [//www.loc.gov/exhibits/red-book-of-carl-jung/the-red-book-and-beyond.html#obj2](#) Some of Jung's Red Book illustrations resemble this reproduction of a nineteenth-century Tibetan mandala—a symbolic, circular form, usually with symmetrical divisions and figures of deities in the center. Mandalas are used in Buddhism and other religions as a representation of the universe and an aid to meditation. Jung believed the mandala was one of the oldest human religious symbols, found all over the world. Some of his patients drew mandala-like images, as did Jung himself even before learning about the Asian tradition. Jung remarked that "The "squaring of the circle" is one of the many archetypal motifs which form the basic patterns of our dreams and fantasies. . . . it could even be called the archetype of wholeness." Enlarge "Mandala of Auspicious Beginnings," in Chibetto "mandara" sh usel (Tibetan Mandalas: The Ngor Collection). Toyko: Kodansha, 1983. Asian Division, Library of Congress. Courtesy of Kodansha International Ltd., Tokyo (015.00.00). [Digital ID # rb0015] Bookmark this item: [//www.loc.gov/exhibits/red-book-of-carl-jung/the-red-book-and-beyond.html#obj3](#) At Bolligen Jung created a "monument out of stone to express what the Tower means to me." On one side, Jung carved in Latin "In remembrance of his seventy-fifth birthday, C. G. Jung made and placed this here as a thanks offering in the year 1950." On the side shown in this photograph, Jung created a mandala centered on Telesphorus, the Greek demi-god of healing, surrounded by a Greek inscription, part of which says, "This is Telesphorus, who roams through the dark regions of this cosmos and glows like a star out of the depths. He points the way to the gates of the sun and to the land of dreams." Enlarge Photograph of Jung's monument at Bolligen, after 1950. Bollingen Foundation Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (018.00.00). [Digital ID # rb0018] Bookmark this item: [//www.loc.gov/exhibits/red-book-of-carl-jung/the-red-book-and-beyond.html#obj4](#) In 1903 Carl G. Jung married Emma Rauschenbach (1882-1955), a member of an old Swiss-German family of wealthy industrialists. Her inheritance gave Jung the financial freedom to pursue his own work and interests. In 1909 the Jung family, which eventually included five children, moved to a house they built at Küsnacht, near Zurich. From the earliest days of their marriage, Emma took a strong interest in her husband's work. She became a noted analyst in her own right and spent thirty years studying the legends of the Holy Grail. When she died, Jung declared: "She had an immense influence of unfathomable depth on my life." Enlarge Carl G. and Emma Rauschenbach Jung at their home at Küsnacht, near Zurich, before 1955. Bollingen Foundation Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (057.00.00) Enlarge Carl G. Jung in the study of his home at Küsnacht, near Zurich, 1950s. Bollingen Foundation Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (053.00.00) [Digital ID # rb0053] Bookmark this item: [//www.loc.gov/exhibits/red-book-of-carl-jung/the-red-book-and-beyond.html#obj5](#) Back to Top In 1923, Jung began his "Tower", a solitary retreat on the shores of Lake Zurich where he went for renewal and repose. He built the house in sections, adding the last in 1955 in response to his wife's death. In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung said the house was "a representation in stone of my innermost thoughts and of the knowledge I had acquired and a concretization of the individuation process." Jung felt that At Bolligen "I am in the midst of my true life, I am most deeply myself." The Tower inspired the name of the Bollingen Foundation, set up in 1945 to disseminate Jung's ideas. In 1973 the foundation donated its records to the Library of Congress. Enlarge Photograph of the Tower at Bolligen. Bollingen Foundation Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (050.00.00). [Digital ID # rb0050] Bookmark this item: [//www.loc.gov/exhibits/red-book-of-carl-jung/the-red-book-and-beyond.html#obj6](#) In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung described his Tower retreat at Bolligen: "I have done without electricity, and tend the fireplace and stove myself. Evenings, I light the old lamps. There is no running water, and I pump the water from the well. I chop the wood and cook the food. These simple acts make man simple and how difficult it is to be simple!" Enlarge Carl Jung pumping water in the Tower at Bolligen, ca. 1960. Bollingen Foundation Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (055.00.00). [Digital ID # rb0055] Bookmark this item: [//www.loc.gov/exhibits/red-book-of-carl-jung/the-red-book-and-beyond.html#obj7](#) For much of his life Jung spent several months a year living at Bolligen, which he described as "a place of spiritual concentration." He did much of his writing, painting, and sculpture there. In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, he spoke about his life at the Tower: "In my retiring room I am by myself. I keep the key with me all the time; no one else is allowed in there except with my permission. In the course of the years I have done paintings on the wall, and so have expressed all those things which have carried me out of time into seclusion, out of the present into timelessness." Enlarge Carl Jung reading in the Tower at Bolligen, ca. 1960. Bollingen Foundation Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (056.00.00). [Digital ID # rb0056] Bookmark this item: [//www.loc.gov/exhibits/red-book-of-carl-jung/the-red-book-and-beyond.html#obj8](#) After his first visit in 1909, Jung returned to the United States periodically to deliver lectures, lead seminars, counsel individuals, and conduct anthropological research on the Southwestern Native American tribes. In this lecture delivered in 1936 to followers in New York, Jung explained his distinctive concept of the collective unconscious: "The contents of the collective unconscious have never been in consciousness and therefore have never been individually acquired but owe their existence exclusively to heredity." In contrast to the many Western thinkers who held that the human mind was at birth a blank slate, Jung believed that it was in the highest degree influenced by inherited presuppositions. Enlarge C. G. Jung. *The Concept of the Collective Unconscious. A Lecture Delivered before the Analytical Psychology Club of New York City, October 2, 1936.* Page 2. New York: The Club, 1936. Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress. Courtesy of the Analytical Psychology Club of New York City (019.00.00) Bookmark this item: [//www.loc.gov/exhibits/red-book-of-carl-jung/the-red-book-and-beyond.html#obj9](#) Jung called the process of individuation "the central concept of my psychology." He wrote "I use the term 'individuation,' to denote the process by which a person becomes a psychological in-dividual, that is, a separate, indivisible unity or whole." The process involves the integration of the conscious and unconscious elements of the personality, leading to individual wholeness and self-realization. In this draft, Frances Wickes (1875-1967), a Jung student who became an analyst in New York City, termed individuation the goal of Jungian analysis. The "true self" having been discovered, the chief aim of the individual, Wickes wrote, becomes the creation "out of himself of the most significant product of which he is capable." Enlarge Frances Wickes. Draft article, n.d. Typescript, Frances Wickes Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (037.00.00). [Digital ID # rb0037] Bookmark this item: [//www.loc.gov/exhibits/red-book-of-carl-jung/the-red-book-and-beyond.html#obj10](#) In this letter to Smith Ely Jelliffe (1866-1945), an American physician, teacher, medical editor, and pioneering psychotherapist, Jung discusses schizophrenic patients and includes examples of drawings they produced. The images contain what Jung termed "Bruchlinien," breaking lines that split the pictures, apparently indicative of the patients' mental states. Jung here wonders whether "unconscious symbolization has a meaning or aim at all or whether it is merely reactivated stuff, i.e., relics of the past." However, in the Red Book Jung wrote that "if one accepts a symbol, it is as if a door opens leading into a new room whose existence one did not previously know . . . Salvation is a long road that leads through many gates. These gates are symbols." Enlarge Letter from Carl G. Jung to Smith Ely Jelliffe, October 16, 1932. Smith Ely Jelliffe Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (021.00.00). [Digital ID # rb0021] Bookmark this item: [//www.loc.gov/exhibits/red-book-of-carl-jung/the-red-book-and-beyond.html#obj11](#) In 1937, the Guild of Pastoral Psychology was established in London to encourage the study of psychology among clergy and other spiritual leaders, with particular reference to Jung's work. In 1939, its patron, Jung, delivered this lecture, in which he stated that "Only the symbolic life can express the needs of the soul." The guild's website explains the cover logo: "The chalice symbolises the great womb of life. The opposites meet in all their variety and fecundity and are contained until they transform. It is the female and maternal giving birth to life. The snake is that symbol of regeneration because it casts away its old skin, burnt in the fiery tension between opposites, and a new form emerges." Enlarge C. G. Jung. *The Symbolic Life: A Seminar Talk Given on 5th April, 1939,* transcript from shorthand notes of Derek Kitchin. London: Guild of Pastoral Psychology, 1954. Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress. Courtesy of the Guild of Pastoral Psychology (023.00.00). [Digital ID # rb0023] Bookmark this item: [//www.loc.gov/exhibits/red-book-of-carl-jung/the-red-book-and-beyond.html#obj13](#) Back to top



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