



How to Fight a Hydra: Face Your Fears, Pursue Your Ambitions, and Become the Hero You Are Destined to Be

Josh Kaufman

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A survival manual for ambitious artists entrepreneurs ADVENTURERS

You have a Hydra: a grand, ambitious project you've always wanted to tackle. It feels overwhelming, unconquerable. Chop off one of a Hydra's heads, and two more grow in its place.

How will you ever defeat such a terrifying monstrosity – and live to tell the tale?

In this illuminating fable, productivity expert Josh Kaufman explores the uncertainty and fear inherent in facing down any ambitious challenge, from starting a new business to completing a work of art.

The risks involved can never be eliminated, but they can be understood, anticipated, and mitigated. Armed with an adventurer's insights into tackling unknown and fearsome challenges, you can tame a project of epic proportions.

How to Fight a Hydra is an essential handbook for artists, creative professionals, and entrepreneurs tired of ignoring the call to adventure.

So prepare for battle, brave soul. Draw your sword. Light your torch.

In the darkness ahead, your Hydra awaits.

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Angela Magic Art says

What an AMAZING book to complete my reading challenge with! This book is Phenomenal!! I have never in my life, felt more understood. This book just hit Soooooo close to home for me because I am one of the "Adventurers", Entrepreneurs, and dream chasers this book is modeled after. I have read Josh Kaufman's other book; "The Personal MBA" and really really enjoyed that, I found it so helpful and supportive. So when I got an email that he had a new book out, I jumped on it! This book is a beautifully short, but extremely powerful fable about a young man going after his dreams despite what the people close to him say, and despite all the judgement and doubt of others. He goes on an epic fantasy journey to slay a Hydra, and we see through his eyes all the lessons and wisdom he learns and gives to the reader through beautifully written metaphors. This book speaks to your soul, through a high stakes fantasy story. Having all that wisdom and advice wrapped up in a fantasy story was everything I could ever want as a lover of fantasy books, and an avid reader of business and self-help books. I often feel that no one around me really understands my out of the box direction in life, and there were times that I actually teared up a bit, (which never happens to me), because of how much I related to the things that were happening and being talked about. Everyone should read this book!! Even if you aren't strictly an entrepreneur/adventurer type. It's perfect for anyone who has fears in the back of their heads, and feels like they are unsure about what they are doing. All I can say is this book is great, super entertaining, and meaningful. I wish I could have written it.

<3

Alis says

Halfway through the book, I admit that I was skeptical.

What the author does is craft an entertaining fantasy story about a man who sets out to slay a multi-headed Hydra (a metaphor for a really big undertaking you may be considering, but hesitant to start). Then he follows up the story with explanations and advice that make much more sense within the context of the fantasy story. The two together make up a relatively interesting read to give you attainable and independent thoughts on how you might face whatever foe lies in the way of your success.

sidenote: I really hope the author decides to make an illustrated version. I'd love to share this with kids when they're starting to read. It's never too early (or too late) to start learning How to Fight a Hydra.

Gilbert Stack says

This is a self-help book disguised as a fantasy novella. It's not a gripping or exciting story, but it is interesting as the reader watches our young hero go through the entrepreneurial process in setting out to find and kill the mythical monster. It's clever, but probably most so in that the author has found a way to bring his self-help philosophy to a whole new audience that probably would never have read a traditional self-help book. If you've got a child who likes fantasy, you might slip this one on to their reader and see if they'll give it a shot. They might just learn some lessons that help them in the course of their lives.

Santino Maguire says

A short and sweet book about the adventurer's lifestyle---about facing your fears and accomplishing great things. I read it in about half an hour, and it lands at exactly the right length. Invaluable advice for taking risks and achieving greatness.

Tony Guerra says

It was such a well written book with divisions that made it easy to pick up and continue. It only took about an hour to read, but I was bookmarking throughout. I felt the lessons came fast and the story was authentic. While it's allegorical fiction, it's so well done that you lose yourself in the story. I highly recommend it.

Venkat says

Interesting Read

While reading I felt the philosophy of Bhagavad Gita in some places, in the end author mentioned it. It's a wake up call for those who are afraid of performing their duty, thinking about result even before starting

Helge Reikerås says

This a great and inspiring story for anyone trying to tackle anything that seems incredible hard or impossible. It's not always a good thing when authors want to read their own books imho, but in the case of Josh his voice is just great and is accompanied by sound effects and a background ambiance that makes this book a must for listening to as an audiobook.

Kyle says

Short and sweet. I have the Kindle copy but listened to the whole thing on Audible (around 1 hour and 30 minutes) during several commutes in one day.

What it's about

The core part of the story is the main character's pursuit of the hydra. (The audiobook narrated that part in roughly 1 hour. The sound effects and silences added to the atmosphere of the performance.)

The story did a great job in turning the amorphous fear of a big undertaking into something as concrete as hunting a hydra.

How it works

During crisis and hardship, a list of insights and to-dos in a non-fiction essay is easy to forget. However, because the insights (on facing our fears & pursuing our ambitions) are bundled with a concrete story, it feels almost like lived experience.

In our own moments of doubt, we can remember the adventurer's decisions. In our own moments of fear, we can remember the adventurer's determination.

The author got insights from behavioral psychology, military doctrine, and other fields to substantiate the adventurer's insights. After my second reading, I realize how deep and effective these insights are. In the Author's Commentary, he explains the sources of these insights.

Applying what was learned

As I face the big writing project I will undertake during NaNoWriMo, my fears are no longer nameless and limitless.

With the image of the hydra, I know that even though there are 9 or more heads, this freaking hydra will eventually run out of them. By changing the metaphor, I can suddenly use strategies and tactics from battle.

Rather than acting like a deer staring at the headlights of nameless fear,
I can face this daunting task like a warrior facing a hydra for the nth time.

Paulius says

The real hydras are Josh Kaufman's books. Every time you finish reading one of his books, he tasks you with reading a bunch of other great books.

I'm still fighting "Personal MBA" hydra (97 book recommendations), "How to Fight a Hydra" gives another 7.

If I read one more book from Josh Kaufman, I'll have to get a bigger apartment just for my books.

Khaled Aloraifi says

A refreshing perspective on journeying through life, it reminds us of the struggles that accompanies journeying.

Amanda Butler says

A beautifully crafted metaphor for tackling real life projects. I highly recommend this.

Terrence Cooper says

Oh man, this book is so helpful. The similarities that the man had to go through to become who he wanted to be in the story is just like everyone in life. It's a process to become the person you want to be or to achieve a goal. You have to not only visualize it but you have to set your self up to make it become a reality. Although there will be some discouraging events that will probably make you think twice about it but you still have to keep pushing no matter what. This book taught me that quitting is not an option. You have to come to a conclusion on whether you will die trying to achieve your goals than quit.

Harish Sankar says

Brilliant 30 minute Read!

A beautiful metaphor for the complexities we face in real life, and the inner battles that we must win , to make progress!

Excellent! Highlighted more than half the book!

Rick says

Personal growth is a topic that has been in my mind for a good while now. (Essentially ever since I stepped deeper into full-blown adulthood by turning 30 about year ago and also watching every *Queer Eye* episode at least ten times.) And naturally books on the subject have turned out to be something of an interest, and I've been keeping an eye out for them.

The only problem is that I find most of these types of books — so called "self-help" books — to be mostly insufferable. I'm not very big on generalizations and black-and-white views of the world as a whole — and less on promises of shortcuts and quick-fixes for the toils and troubles of life — and these are things on which a lot of these books seem to thrive. So, more often than not, I end up thinking of them as tedious and condescending at best; intellectually and emotionally dishonest at worst.

I much prefer seeking out books which approach the subject from entirely different angles: diaries and biographies; books about history or science or art. I take what I can from them, and try, as best I can, to apply them to my life.

Which is how I stumbled upon Josh Kaufman's *How to Fight a Hydra*.

The premise of *How to Fight a Hydra* is simple but charming: it's presented as a guidebook written by an ancient adventurer on the topic of slaying hydras. Fun! That the author tells you in the introduction that the hydra is actually a metaphor for intimidating projects you want to tackle in your life is quite besides the point and a little redundant. You can read this straight through as a fantasy tale, not knowing what it actually is, and still glean the lessons the story wishes you to take away from it, as the best fairy tales are wont to do.

It's the "spoonful of sugar" method: because who wants to spend time with books about heavy and heady topics like human anxiety when there are stories about monsters out there waiting to be read?

It can sound a little gimmicky and childish, to be sure. But what Kaufman has done is simply go back to the beginning. Because this self-help-book-disguised-as-a-fairy-tale is really just doing what fairy tales have been doing since the dawn of stories: it tells us that slaying a hydra is pretty damn hard, and that it's just half the fun. Or, as G.K. Chesterton put it:

Fairy tales are more than true: not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten.

Fairy tales are the best and most enduring kind of self-help books, it turns out. Kaufman seems to get it. I hope other catch on, too.

Maya Gopalakrishnan says

Fighting the hydra!

I like Josh Kaufman's writing and approach so was expecting a good read, however two things are slightly disappointing. First the length of the book- it could have easily made a full length book on tackling complex and uncertain tasks. Having said that this book has pearls of wisdom densely packed. Second is I'm not sure if the fiction part is really a great idea as the author thinks though the point about metaphors in well taken. Maybe a second read will resolve some ambivalence. Recommended.
