

Over the years, many questions have arisen about who or what the Freemasons are. Some of the answers have been quite fanciful, others outright wrong. Below you will find a collection of numerous questions, some of the more popular, organized into three broad topics. Please select a specific question to jump right to it or browse them in any order you wish.

I. WHO/WHAT ARE MASONS?

(1) What is Freemasonry?

Freemasonry is a fraternal order whose basic tenets are brotherly love, relief (philanthropy), and truth. We strive to enjoy the company of our brother Masons, assist them in times of personal trouble, and reinforce essential moral values. There is an old adage that Freemasonry "takes good men and makes them better", which is our goal.

It has often been observed that men are the products of everything they come into contact with during their lifetime. Freemasonry offers a man an opportunity to come into regular, enjoyable contact with men of good character, thus reinforcing his own personal moral development. Of course, Freemasonry is also meant to be enjoyed by its membership, so the order should not be viewed simply as a philosophical club, but rather a vibrant fellowship of men who seek to enjoy each other's company, a fraternity.

To maintain this fraternity, discussion of religion and politics within the Lodge is forbidden, as these subjects are those that have often divided men in the past. Masons cover the spectrum of both religious and political beliefs and encourages a man to be religious without advocating a particular religion, and to be active in his community without advocating a particular medium of political expression.

While there probably are some actual stone-workers who are Masons, Freemasonry does not teach its membership the literal techniques of stonework. Rather, it takes the actual "operative" work of Medieval Masons and uses it as an allegory for moral development. Thus, the symbols of Freemasonry are the common tools that were used by medieval stonemasons: the gavel, the rule, the compass, the square, the level, etc. Each of these has a symbolic meaning in Freemasonry. For example, Masons are said to meet "on the level", meaning that all Masons are brothers, regardless of social status, personal wealth, or office within the Lodge or in the world at large. Similar symbolism exists for other tools.

Freemasonry is distinguished from other fraternal orders by its emphasis on moral character, its ornate rituals, and its long tradition and history, which dates back to at least the 17th century in modern form, the 14th century (c. 1350-1390) in the written evidence of its precursors, and back to the mists of antiquity in its origin. Freemasonry has a continuously documented paper history (i.e., Lodge to Lodge) since 1717, though historical analysis shows Freemasonry to be much older.

There are also a great many things that Freemasonry is NOT: a religion, a secret society, etc., and these will be covered later in this FAQ.

There are three degrees in Freemasonry. Other appendant bodies confer additional degrees, up to the 32nd (or the honorary 33rd) of the Scottish Rite, but in symbolic Freemasonry (or Symbolic Lodge Freemasonry) proper, there are only three. At the Symbolic Lodge, Masons receive the degrees of Entered Apprentice (first degree), Fellowcraft (second degree), and Master Mason (third degree). Promotion generally requires the mastery of a small body of memorized material, the contents of which varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. In some jurisdictions, only the signs, tokens, and grips of each degree must be learned; in others, a longer amount of material.

Of course, no Mason would ever look down upon a Brother simply because he was of a lower degree-- the degrees do not exist to create a pecking order or to confer rank. Rather, they are a system of initiation that allows men to become familiar with the august and ancient history and principles of Freemasonry at a comfortable pace. Proceeding from Entered Apprentice to Master Mason in the US can take as little as three months, while in England, the degrees are spaced apart by a year's interval.

Most Lodges have regular communications (meetings) once a month, that are also referred to as "business meetings". In the US, these are typically only open to Master Masons. In England, these meetings are usually opened in the first degree, and Entered Apprentices may attend. Conferring of degrees is usually done at other meetings during the month.

While conferral of degrees and mundane business do take up a lot of a Lodge's time, there are a host of other activities that Masons engage in within the fraternity. Charitable work is often done, in the form of fundraisers, community volunteer work, etc. And there are also a great many things done for the simple pleasure of company: monthly breakfasts or dinners, picnics, card/chess matches, lectures on Masonic history, you name it. Freemasonry is a fraternity, and its membership seeks to have fun.

Local Masonic Lodges are organized under Grand Lodges. In the United States, each state has its own Grand Lodge, which is a peer with every other Grand Lodge. There is not "Grandest Lodge"-- each Grand Lodge is supreme in its jurisdiction (e.g., in the US, in its state) but has no authority elsewhere. Of course, this does not mean that Freemasonry in New York is radically different than Freemasonry in Scotland or New Mexico. Masons are very traditional and the differences between Grand Lodges are usually minor.

The head of a Symbolic Lodge is given the title Worshipful Master. This, of course, does not imply that Masons worship him; it is merely a stylish title. Masonic Lodges can be found in many cities, of all sizes, around the world. There are presently approximately 5 million Masons, half of which are in the United States.

(2) What is the Scottish Rite?

The Scottish Rite is an appendant body of Freemasonry, meaning that it is not part of the Symbolic Lodge per se, but closely associated with Freemasonry. It requires that a man be a Master Mason before joining the Scottish Rite. The Scottish Rite confers the 4th through 32nd degrees. The degree work may be, but is not necessarily, completed at one time. Any Master Mason is eligible to join the Scottish Rite. The degrees of the Scottish Rite continue the symbolism of the first three Masonic degrees. For a discussion of the 33rd degree, see question 9 of this section.

The above refers to the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite (AASR), not the Rectified Scottish Rite, which exists both in United Grand Lodge of England-recognized and non-recognized Masonic bodies in the Europe.

(3) What is the York Rite?

The York Rite, like the Scottish Rite, is an appendant body of Freemasonry, and confers degrees beyond the Symbolic Lodge's three degrees. It consists of nine degrees additional degrees: Mark Master, Past Master, Most Excellent Master, and Royal Arch Mason; the Cryptic Degrees of the Royal Master, Select Master, and Super Excellent Master; and the Chivalric Orders of the Order of the Red Cross, Order of the Knights of Malta and the Order of Knights Templar.

The Temple degrees, which comprise the top degrees of the York Rite are specifically Christian. Or at least, it can be stated that the oath is: in some Grand Lodges in the US and abroad, one need not be a Christian, but rather only be willing to take a Christian OATH. The difference here is that there are some who would willingly swear to defend the Christian faith on the grounds that they would defend any man's faith. The Chapter (or Royal Arch) and Council Of Royal And Select Masters (Cryptic Rite), which comprise the first two sections of the York Rite, are not specifically Christian.

As with most things Masonic, discuss any concerns with your local York Rite, who can advise you regarding your eligibility.

(4) What is the Shrine?

The Shrine is not an appendant body of Freemasonry, though the distinction would escape many. The Shrine confers no additional degrees. It was founded in 1872 (the Mecca Temple in New York City) and an Arabic theme was chosen. Hence, the distinctive red fez that Shriners wear at official functions.

Members of the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine for North America (AASONM is an anagram for "A MASON") may be required to be members of the Scottish Rite's 32nd degree, and/or Knights Templar of the York Rite. The Shrine is most noted for its emphasis on philanthropy and its jolly outlook on life-- it has been called "the playground of Freemasonry". This is expressed as "Pleasure without intemperance, hospitality without rudeness, and jollity without coarseness."

The Shrine is most noted for its benevolent endeavors in Children's Hospitals and the Shrine Circus.

The Royal Order of Jesters is a group drawn from Shrine membership, by invitation only.

(5) What is the Eastern Star?

The Order of the Eastern Star is an adoptive rite of Freemasonry with teachings based on the Bible and objectives that are charitable and benevolent. The founder of OES was Dr. Robert Morris, a lawyer and educator from Boston, Massachusetts, who was a Master Mason and Past Grand Master of Kentucky. Dr. Morris intended his creation to become a female branch of Freemasonry, but he failed to overcome the great opposition this idea engendered. After his first published ritual in 1849-50, he became associated with Robert Macoy who wrote and published a ritual based on Morris' in 1867. The first Grand Chapter was organized in Michigan in the same year. (There is evidence for an organization of the same name founded variously in 1788 or 1793, but this group was defunct by 1867.) Subordinate (local) chapters operate under charter from state level grand chapters which are responsible to the General Grand Chapter at the International Eastern Star temple in Washington, D.C.

Members must be eighteen years or older and either Master Masons in good standing or properly related to a Master Mason in good standing. The latter category includes wives; widows; sisters; daughters; mothers; granddaughters; step-mothers; step daughters; step-sisters; and half-sisters. In 1994 this was expanded to include nieces, daughters-in-law, and grandmothers.

Each chapter has eighteen officers, some elected and others appointed. Two offices are specifically male (Patron and Associate Patron) while nine offices are specifically female (including Matron and Associate Matron). While the Worthy Matron is considered to be the presiding officer of the chapter, the degrees cannot be conferred without a presiding brother in good standing (hence the Patron and Associate Patron).

Each chapter retains the right to decide who shall be a member of the organization. Election to the degrees must be unanimous, without debate, and secret. The successful candidate must profess a belief in a Supreme Being and is initiated in five degrees, which are conferred in one ceremony. (When Eastern Star was created, it was intended to be the first of a three degree series. The second and third degrees were Queen of the South and the Order of the Amaranth, respectively.)

Interestingly enough, OES requires only the belief in a Supreme Being even though the degrees are based in both the Old and New Testaments. While non-Christians are not specifically barred from membership, it would seem to be difficult to be other than Christian and belong to the Order.

(6) What is DeMolay?

The International Order of DeMolay is the world's largest fraternal organization for young men between the ages of 13 and 21. The Order was founded in Kansas City, Missouri on March 24, 1919 by Frank Sherman Land. DeMolay Chapters are sponsored by Masonic Lodges, and some members of the sponsoring body also serve as Advisors on the Chapter's Advisory Council. Structurally, it is similar to Freemasonry. The officers of a Chapter are the Master Councilor, Senior Councilor, Junior Councilor, Senior Deacon, Junior Deacon, Senior Steward, Junior Steward, Orator, Scribe, Marshal, Chaplain, Standard Bearer, Sentinel, Almoner, and seven Preceptors.

DeMolay Chapters hold monthly or bi-weekly meetings with Masonic-like Ritual. Other activities include athletic tournaments and events, social functions (joint activities with Rainbow are encouraged), fund-raising activities, Masonic service activities, and civic and philanthropic activities.

DeMolays are taught the seven cardinal virtues of the Order--filial love, reverence for sacred things, courtesy, comradeship, fidelity, cleanness, and patriotism-- and the importance of practicing them in their daily lives.

The Order's namesake is Jacques DeMolay, who was the last Grand Master of the Knights Templar and who was executed by the Inquisition on March 18, 1314. Louis Lower, the first DeMolay, and his group of friends, when asked by Dad Land to choose a name for their group, believed that his heroic fidelity and loyalty to his fellow Templars were qualities with which they wanted their group to be identified. Mind you, Dad Land explained this to them before they chose their name.

A fascinating book about the history of the Order and the life of Frank S. Land (1890-1959), titled "Hi! Dad," is available from the DeMolay and More Store or practically any member of the Order. The phone number of the DeMolay and More Store is 1-800-DEMOLAY.

(7a) What is Job's Daughters?

The International Order of Job's Daughters is an organization for girls between the ages of 13 and 20 years and limited to daughters or relatives of Master Masons. It was established October 20, 1920 by Mrs. Ethel T. Wead Mick of Omaha, Nebraska. It has one ceremony, the ritual of which was prepared by Mrs. Mick and is based on Job 42:15. It maintains an educational fund and aids Shrine hospitals and other charities. Local groups are called Bethels and each is headed by an Honored Queen and is under the guidance of a Guardian Council of five adults. Grand Council may be formed in any state where there are five Bethels. There is a national Supreme Council, which has nineteen officers elected annually by the Grand Councils from among members of the Grand Councils.

(7b) What is Rainbow?

"The International Order of the Rainbow for Girls is an organization for girls from 11 to 20 years of age. Masonic relationship is not required. Rainbow for Girls stands for belief in the Supreme Being, dignity of character, the higher things in life, effective leadership, church membership, patriotism, cooperation with equals, love of home and services to others.

At meetings, Rainbow Girls wear dresses varying pastel colors and shades while Grand Officers wear white."--"The International Order of Rainbow for Girls was founded by Rev. W. Mark Sexson in 1922 for girls from 11 to 20, membership requirements are to be sponsored by a Master Mason or Eastern Star and two members of the Order, Origins of Lessons taught are from the Bible using the Humanities, the Presiding Officer is the Worthy Advisor, the Subordinate Line Officers are the Worthy Associate Advisor - the station of Charity - the station of Hope - the station of Faith, the Presiding Advisor is the Mother Advisor, and the Adult Leadership is the Advisory Board."

(8) What are some other Masonic organizations?

Acacia: A college fraternity for Master Masons, the sons of Masons, and young men recommended by two Masons one of whom is an Acacian himself. The national governing board is composed exclusively of 32nd and 33rd degree Masons.

Order of Amaranth: Open to Masons and their wives, mothers, daughters, widows, and sisters. At least one Master Mason must be present at every initiation. It confers only one degree.

Daughters of Mokanna: An auxiliary organization of the Grotto comprised of the wives, mothers, daughters, widows, and sisters of the Master Masons in the Grotto.

Daughters of the Nile: An auxiliary organization for the wives, mothers, daughters, widows, and sisters of members of the Shrine.

Desoms: An organization for deaf Masons.

Grotto: A fun organization open to Master Masons. It imitates the Shrine to a large degree, but requires only that a member be a Master Mason rather than a 32nd degree Mason or Knight Templar. Officially known as The Mystic Order of Veiled Prophets of the Enchanted Realm (MOVPER).

High Twelve International: An organization of Master Masons that usually meet for lunch, enjoy fellowship, and support Masonic causes, with special emphasis on youth and patriotic endeavors.

L.O.S. of N.A.: The Ladies' Oriental Shrine of North America. Another auxiliary for the wives, mothers, daughters, widows, and sisters of Shrine members.

National Sojourners, Inc.: Open to Master Masons which are U.S. citizens and who have served or are serving as a commissioned or warrant officer in the United States military or in any armed service of a nation allied with the US in time of war.

Philalethes: A group for Masons interested in Masonic philosophy and history.

Royal Order of Scotland: An organization for Christian Masons who have been 32nd degree Masons or Knights Templar for five or more years.

Tall Cedars of Lebanon: A fun organization for Master Masons similar to the Grotto. It confers the two degrees of the Royal Court and the Sidonian.

White Shrine of Jerusalem: For Master Masons and their wives, mothers, daughters, widows, and sisters. Members must profess a belief in the defense of the Christian religion.

(9) What is Co-Masonry?

Co-Masonry refers to Masonic Lodges that admit both men and women. Co-Masonry traces its heritage back to the 19th century.

There are two Grand Lodges of Co-Masonry with jurisdiction in America: Le Droit Humain, a GL based in Paris, France and the original Co-Masonic organization in the US, and the American Federation of Human Rights (aka American Co-Masonry), which is based in Larkspur, Colorado.

The degree structure differs slightly from standard Symbolic Lodge structure (i.e., the Scottish Rite is worked as part of the regular Lodge, not a separate organization), but in most things Co-Masonic lodges function as regular Masonic lodges.

(10) What is Prince Hall Freemasonry?

There are some schools of thought that Prince Hall (his name not a title) was born in Barbados to a free black woman and a Scottish father. He emigrated to the Colony of Boston, Mass. and acquired real estate, making him eligible to vote. It was also documented that he was a devout Christian and a leather-worker by trade. On March 6, 1775, during the American War of Independence, Prince Hall along with fourteen men of color were made Masons in Army Lodge #441 of the Irish Constitution. When Army Lodge moved on, the aforesaid brethren were issued a permit authorizing them to appear publicly as a Masonic body for the purpose of celebrating the feast of St. John and to bury their dead.

On March 2, 1784, these same brethren applied to the Grand Lodge of England for a charter, which was subsequently issued to them on September 29, 1784. They were warranted under the name of African

Lodge, No. 459 on the register of the Grand Lodge of England by authority of then Grand Master, the Duke of Cumberland. Prince Hall was the first Master. That charter, which is authenticated and in safekeeping, is believed to be the only original charter issued from the Grand Lodge of England still in the possession of any Lodge in the United States.

African Lodge allowed itself to slip into arrears in the late 1790's and was stricken from the rolls after the Union of 1813, although it had attempted correspondence in 1802 and 1806. In 1827, after other unreplicated attempts at communication, it declared its independence of any external authority and began to call itself African Grand Lodge No. 1.

It is interesting to note that when the Massachusetts lodges which were acting as a Provincial Grand Lodge declared themselves an independent Grand Lodge, and even when the present Grand Lodge of Massachusetts was formed by the amalgamation of two separate Grand Lodges, African Lodge was not invited to take part, even though it held a warrant every bit as valid as those others. This may be explained in part by this 1795 quote from John Eliot, who later became Grand Chaplain of the Gr. Lodge of Mass. He wrote, "White Masons, who are not more skilled in geometry than their black brethren, will not acknowledge them... the truth is they are ashamed of being on an equality with blacks."

Today there are 45 Grand Lodges (the latest being the just formed "Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of the Caribbean") that trace their origin back to African Lodge #459. There are more than 5000 Prince Hall Lodges and over 300,000 members. So far as it is known, their ritual, their secrets, their procedures, their requirements, their beliefs, their tenets or fundamental principles, are all either identical with ours, or recognizably similar.

To add to this:

The United Grand Lodge of England has now officially recognized Prince Hall Lodges. Many US Grand Lodges have recognized PH GLs within their jurisdictions, and it has been or is being discussed in other jurisdictions. Since every Grand Lodge is autonomous and the supreme authority in its jurisdiction, this issue must be approached on a state-by-state basis.

Some have criticized Freemasonry as "segregated" due to the Prince Hall Lodges, but this is a ridiculous claim, since there are many black Masons in non-PH Lodges and white members in PH Lodges, and displays a fundamental ignorance of Masonic history.

(11) What is a 33rd degree Mason?

The Scottish Rite awards a special honorary degree, the 33rd, to those it feels has made an outstanding contribution to Freemasonry, the community as a whole, and to mankind. There is no way to "achieve" this degree or "take" it, in the sense that one takes the 4th through 32nd degrees in the Scottish Rite. It is a singular honor, rarely bestowed, and greatly admired.

(12) Are there any Masonic functions that I can attend as a non-Mason?

Yes. Many Lodges open their installation of officers to the public. Once a year, a new Worshipful Master takes office. The ceremony performed during his inauguration is public. It is not the same ceremony as would be performed in a regular Masonic ritual or degree, but it does have the flavoring of Masonic symbolism and allows the public to "get a feel for Freemasonry" without being Masons. NOTE: Not all jurisdictions have public installations. Call or write your local lodge for details.

In addition, many Lodges sponsor public functions throughout the year, such as dinners or charity functions, designed to allow non-Masons who are interested in Freemasonry the chance to talk with Masons and ask questions. For information, call your local Lodge.

(13) Who is the head of the Masons?

No one. Each Grand Lodge has its own jurisdiction and is the supreme authority within that jurisdiction. Obviously, many Grand Lodges have regular communication with each other, but official policy in one has no effect in another.

(14) Are there dues, fees, etc. associated with being a Mason?

Yes. Like all organizations, Lodges must be able to pay their light bills. Typically, there is a one-time fee for the three degrees of Freemasonry, as well as regular annual dues. But these vary widely depending on the number of members, cost of living (rent in Manhattan is higher than it is in rural Oklahoma), the actual physical facilities of the Lodge, etc. The fees and dues, however, are not prohibitively expensive. Rather than give a single figure which may be very different than your local Lodge charges, or publishing an extended table of costs, it is easiest to simply refer the interested to their local Lodge.

Incidentally, many Grand Lodge jurisdictions provide for "life membership" after a Mason has paid dues for a long period. For example, in Indiana a Mason is no longer asked to pay dues after he has been a Mason for fifty years. Other jurisdictions allow members to pay a lump sum for life membership. As with almost everything in Freemasonry, check with your local Grand Lodge or Lodge for more information.

(15) I hear Masons refer to an "apron". What is that?

"During the ceremonies of his initiation, each Mason is presented with a white apron. It is, to him, an emblem of innocence and the badge of a Mason. It has, in all ages, been cherished by the rich, the poor, the high and the low. It is his for life. He will never receive another one and has, therefore, been cautioned to take it home and instructed in its care. While perfectly satisfactory for him to do so if he desires, he need not bring it to Lodge, as linen aprons are provided for his use meetings." (From a pamphlet, "To the Lady and Family of a Mason")

The above applies to the US. In many other countries, the Master Mason owns his regalia and brings it to the Lodge.

(16) What is a "Masonic Funeral"?

"Any member who was in good standing at the time of his death is entitled to a Masonic funeral if he or his family requests it. Such a request should be made to the Master of his Lodge who will make the necessary arrangements with the family, the mortuary, and the minister. A service is authorized by the jurisdiction in which you are located, and consists of participation at the mortuary, the beginning at the mortuary and the closing at the graveside, or graveside only. Pallbearers will be furnished at the request of the family. In general, the Lodge will do as much or as little as the nearest relative wishes it to do." (From a pamphlet, "To the Lady and Family of a Mason")

II. PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS & MYTHS

(1) Are Masons just a bunch of old men? Isn't Freemasonry dying out?

As regards the United States:

There is no doubt that the population of Masons is aging. There was a huge increase in membership in almost all fraternal orders after World War II, including Freemasonry. This peaked at sometime in the late 50s. During the social turbulence and generational strains of the 60s and 70s, new membership fell off, with the result that by the 1980s, total membership was in sharp decline.

However, there are signs that membership has leveled out, or is gaining in some areas. In many lodges, there are a great number of 50-and-up members, and a number of 30-and-under members, with a gulf in between, representing where Baby Boomers would have been. Of course, we are speaking in broad

generalities here-- there is no way to know the demographics of your local Lodge without asking one of its members.

The overall point is that Masonic membership, when talking on a national scale, has probably hit a stable membership base, after a huge surge and then fall in membership.

(2) Aren't Masons racist/elitist?

Regarding racism: Freemasonry explicitly states the equality of men, regardless of race, creed, or color. But there are some Masons who are prejudiced, and this is unfortunate, saddening, and unMasonic. However, it is not representative of Freemasonry as a whole, or representative of anything except a tiny minority of Masons. There are Masons of all ethnic backgrounds.

"Elitism" is harder to define. If you mean that Masons are highly selective in their membership, then yes, Masons are elitists. But just criteria is used: men of good character, of good report, who believe in God. Does the majority of the population fit that criteria? If you think not, then you could say that Masons are elitists.

The idea that Freemasonry is only open to the patrician class, the landed gentry, and the wealthy is incorrect. There are Masons of all economic backgrounds. Indeed, there are Lodges which are mostly or wholly made up of blue-collar workers due to local demographics.

(3) Isn't Freemasonry just a place where businessmen make deals?

No. In fact, most Masons believe that to trade with a Brother Mason only because he is a Mason is un-Masonic. Even more importantly, anyone who attempts to join a Lodge solely for business reasons will not be given a petition.

Masons, however, are friends, and it is not surprising that many Masons do trade with Brothers. For one thing, they are dealing with people that are of good character and can be trusted, which is no small statement in the modern marketplace.

But Freemasonry is not a "place to network". Yes, some men do view one of the benefits of membership as an additional source of customers or partners, but few would say that is the only reason they became Masons. The work involved in the degrees alone would make this a poor investment-- better to join the Rotary Club or other business group.

(4) I see titles like "Worshipful Master" and "Senior Deacon"-- is this some kind of cult?

No. The titles are simply colorful, stylish, and full of ancient symbolism. No Mason worships the Master of the Lodge, nor does a Senior (or Junior) Deacon engage in religious actions, as a Deacon of a church might.

(5) Freemasonry is a secret society, right?

Wrong. Secret societies are generally defined as organizations which are unknown to the public and whose existence is denied. The Bavarian Illuminati and the Mafia would be examples of secret societies.

Freemasonry, on the other hand, is well-known and proudly displays its existence. Masonic Temples are clearly marked as such, and many Lodges are listed in the yellow pages (usually under "Fraternal Orders"). Members often wear rings or tie-clips that identify themselves as Masons, and Masons often participate in community charity work. Finally, some Masonic functions are open to the public.

Freemasonry is not a secret society, but rather a society with a few secrets. These are mainly modes of recognition-- the signals, grips, signs, and phrases by which Masons recognize each other. The actual degree rituals are considered secret as well, not because there is anything that would harm Freemasonry by their revelation, but rather because they are more meaningful if the candidate does not know what is going to go on during them beforehand (see question 9 of this section if that makes you nervous).

It should be pointed out that many other organizations have a similar class of secrets. College fraternities (a.k.a. "Greek letter organizations") often have small secrets known only to their members, allowing them to travel from house to house and still be known.

(6) Freemasonry is a religion, right?

Wrong.

Freemasonry is not a religion "by the definitions most people use. Religion, as the term is commonly used, implies several things: a plan for salvation or path by which one reaches the after-life; a theology which attempts to describe the nature of God; and the description of ways or practices by which a man or woman may seek to communicate with God. Freemasonry does none of those things. We offer no plan of salvation. With the exception of saying that He is a loving Father who desires only good for His children, we make no effort to describe the nature of God. And while we open and close our meetings with prayer, and we teach that no man should ever begin any important undertaking without first seeking the guidance of God, we never tell a man how he should pray or for what he should pray. Instead, we tell him that he must find the answers to these great questions in his own faith, in his church or synagogue or other house of worship. We urge men not to neglect their spiritual development and to be faithful in the practice of their religion. As the Grand Lodge of England wrote in 'Freemasonry and Religion', 'Freemasonry is far from indifferent to religion. Without interfering in religious practice, it expects each member to follow his own faith, and to place above all other duties his duty to God by whatever name He is known.' Freemasonry itself makes only a simple religious demand on a man--he must believe that he has an immortal soul and he must believe in God. No atheist can be a Mason.

"Freemasonry has no dogma or theology. It teaches that it is important for every man to have a religion of his choice and to be faithful to it. A good Mason is made even more faithful to the tenets of his faith by membership." (Rev. Norman Vincent Peale, who was also a Mason)

(7) Are Masons really controlling the world/meeting with the Bavarian Illuminati/members of the Trilateralist Commission/etc?

Yes, not to mention the International Jewish Conspiracy, the Elders of Zion, Inver Brass, S.P.E.C.T.R.E., and the minions of Cthulhu.

Anyone who believes that Masons are the Master Puppeteers of the globe either is pulling your leg, has read too much Robert Anton Wilson, or is in need of serious psychotherapy.

(8) Masons are anti-Catholic, right?

Wrong. There is nothing anti-Catholic in Freemasonry, in its traditions, its rituals, or its beliefs.

(9) Masonic rituals are demeaning or embarrassing to the candidate, right?

Nothing could be further from the truth. The rituals (degrees) are designed to reinforce virtues that the Craft finds desirable, such as Justice, Brotherly Love, Truth, and the like. The rituals are actually quite beautiful and filled with ancient language and much symbolism. At no point, however, is the candidate asked to do anything that would embarrass or demean him, nor anything that would violate his obligations to his faith, country, or the law.

(10) I heard/read a Mason talking about a "Masonic Bible". Do Masons have their own Bible?

"No. The Bibles sometimes called 'Masonic Bibles' are just Bibles to which a concordance, giving the Biblical citations on which the Masonic Ritual is based, has been added. Sometimes reference material on Masonic history is included. Anyone is welcome to read one."

(11) I see that Masonic buildings are called Temples. Does that mean that Masons worship there?

No. "Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary provides a definition for the word 'temple' which is as good an explanation as any: 'a building, usually of imposing size, serving the public or an organization in some special way; as, a temple of art, a Masonic temple'".

III. HOW DO I BECOME A MASON?

(1) What are the requirements for becoming a Mason?

In Indiana candidates must be male, at least 18 years of age, able to profess a belief in God, and of good character.

For information on mixed-sex Freemasonry, see the discussion on Co-Masonry in II, 7.

Some Grand Lodges also have a residency requirement; for example, the Grand Lodge of Michigan requires candidates to have lived in its jurisdiction (Michigan) for a minimum of one year.

There are some exceptions to the age requirement. For example, in England and Virginia, the direct relatives of Master Masons in good standing are eligible to join at the age of 18. In some jurisdictions, DeMolays may join upon reaching their 18th birthday. In some jurisdictions candidates must be male, at least 21 years of age.

(2) Can Asians be Masons?

Any human who meets the requirements listed in question (1) of this section is eligible, regardless of race or color.

Some have speculated that while there is no official prohibition against, say, blacks or Asians from becoming Masons, there is a de facto prohibition because they would never be voted into a lodge. This is false. There are Masons of all ethnic backgrounds.

However, it is fair to state that Masons, as humans, are prone to the kinds of prejudices that all humans may succumb to. Since the vote to admit a candidate is anonymous and must be unanimous, one man's unspoken prejudice is sufficient to deny entry to a man (except, of course, in those jurisdictions which require more than one 'no' vote to deny entrance, but you get the idea). Prejudice is inexcusable and irreconcilable with Freemasonry, but then, it is also irreconcilable with Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, and there are certainly Christians, Jews, and Muslims who harbor prejudices.

So it is possible that a Mason, acting unMasonically, could act to keep a member out without due cause. But this is not common, nor is it representative of Freemasonry in general, nor does it conform to the high ideals of Freemasonry.

(3) I have a physical disability. Can I be a Mason?

The answer is almost certainly yes, provided you can attend Lodge (and meet the non-physical criteria in question (1) of this section). Paraplegics have been made Masons, as have the blind, the deaf, and others with a variety of physical handicaps. Minor modifications may need to be done to the rituals (e.g., employing sign language, modifying points where the candidate stands if the candidate is in a wheelchair, etc.) but most Lodges are willing to accommodate candidates.

In medieval times, the requirement to have a sound body free of physical defect was a serious one, since the work of stonemasonry was physically difficult. Some Grand Lodges did carry this requirement into symbolic (i.e., non-operative) Freemasonry. However, in recent times this has all but been eliminated. Talk to your local Lodge if you have any questions.

(4) Can Muslims be Masons?

The only religious requirement is that candidates believe in the Supreme Being. If you can in good faith profess a belief in the Supreme Being, you are eligible to be a Mason. No atheists will ever knowingly be made a Mason.

There are Christian (Catholic, Protestant, Mormon), Jewish, and Muslim Masons. It would be tedious and pointless to go into a religion-by-religion (and then denomination-by-denomination) discussion. The key points to remember are the requirement of belief in the supreme being and the fact that Freemasonry is a fraternity, not a religion.

(5) Do Masons accept Catholics?

Catholicism is only mentioned specifically because it has generated a lot of traffic in the past on the Masonic newsgroups. There is no prohibition in any Grand Lodge jurisdiction against Catholics being made Masons.

(6) What if my religion does not allow the swearing of oaths?

Some Grand Lodges allow affirmations to be used instead of the traditional Masonic oath. This is more common in Europe than in the United States. In all cases, it is best to check with the Grand Lodge in your jurisdiction (or your local Lodge) for more specific information.

(7) Do I have to be invited?

Don't wait to be invited-- you will die waiting. Masons are prohibited from actively recruiting or asking non-Masons to join the fraternity, to insure that candidates come of their own free will.

As with many things Masonic, there are some exceptions to this rule. Some Grand Lodges allow solicitation, provided it is low-key and with the strict provision that no pressure be applied. Still, you don't need to be invited in any jurisdiction, and if you're interested, act.

(8) OK, I'm interested-- how do I proceed?

If you know a Mason, ask him about membership. He will be glad to tell you all about the Craft and the local lodge, and give you a petition if you wish to join.

If you do not know a Mason, drop a letter to the local lodge, and one of the officers will call you (or call the lodge, though you may not get an answer unless someone is actually there).

Typically, the process is as follows:

(a) the applicant fills out a petition. The petition asks for two sponsors, though if you meet and talk with the officers, they can usually find sponsors or act as sponsors themselves if you do not know anyone in the lodge.

(b) the petition is read at the lodge during the next business meeting, which for many lodges is during the first week of the month. A committee is formed to investigate the candidate. The petition also asks for two character references.

(c) the committee meets with the candidate to answer questions, ascertain that he meets the criteria for membership, and find out a little about him. This is not a "grilling session", but rather a friendly and casual chat to make certain that the candidate has been properly informed about Freemasonry and that was not improperly solicited. The committee also contacts the character references listed on the petition (typically asking if they know any reason why the candidate should not be accepted, etc.)

(d) The committee reports back to the lodge during the next business meeting and the candidate is voted on. If accepted, someone from the lodge (often the Secretary) contacts the candidate and informs him that he has been accepted and schedules a date for the Entered Apprentice degree.

IV. HISTORY

(1) Where did Masons come from?

A fascinating question! And, alas, impossible to answer within the confines of this FAQ. There are a number of theories, a lot of debate, and a lot of musty history books. Some of the books listed in question 15 of this section should be of help. As a very brief overview, here is part of an essay by Henry C. Clausen, a noted Masonic author. This is, of course, just one point of view-- many other theories exist, but Cluasen nicely covers the basics:

"Our Masonic antiquity is demonstrated by a so-called Regius Manuscript written around the year 1390, when King Richard II reigned in England, a century before Columbus. It was part of the King's Library that George II presented to the British Museum in 1757. Rediscovered by James O. Halliwell, a non-Mason, and rebound in its present form in 1838, it consists of 794 lines of rhymed English verse and claims there was an introduction of Freemasonry into England during the reign of Athelstan, who ascended the throne in A.D. 925. It sets forth regulations for the Society, fifteen articles and fifteen points and rules of behavior at church, teaching duties to God and Church and Country, and inculcating brotherhood. While the real roots of Freemasonry are lost in faraway mists, these items show that our recorded history goes back well over 600 years. Further proof is furnished through English statutes as, for example, one of 1350 (25 Edward III, Cap. III) which regulated wages of a "Master...Mason at 4 pence per day." The Fabric Role of the 12th century Exeter Cathedral referred to "Freemasons."

The historical advance of science also treats of our operative ancient brethren who were architects and stonemasons of geometry. It is apparent from this portrayal that they had a very real and personal identification with the Deity and that this fervent devotion provided energy to build cathedrals. They embraced the teachings of Plato and understood and applied Pythagorean relationships. Just as there is a beauty of harmony credited to mathematical relationships on which music is based, in precisely the same way these master geometricians treated architecture. The architects and stonemasons became the personification of geometry, performing extraordinary feats with squares and compasses. Geometrical proportion, not measurement, was the rule. Their marks as stonemasons were derived from geometric constructions. The mighty works they wrought, cathedrals with Gothic spires pointing toward the heavens, and especially their "association," were not without danger and opposition, bearing in mind the Inquisition established in 1229, the Saint Bartholomew's Eve Massacre of 1572, and the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. These historical points remind us of the need for our cautions against cowans and eavesdroppers.

Our operative Brethren of the Middle Ages thus were the builders of mighty cathedrals throughout the British Isles and continental Europe, many of which still stand. These skilled craftsmen wrote in enduring stone impressive stories of achievement, frequently chiseled with symbolic markings. With these architectural

structures of these master builders there was a companion moral code. These grew up together. Out of this background modern Freemasonry was born.

Although "Lodges" had existed for centuries, four of the "old" Lodges met in London on St. John the Baptist's Day, June 24, 1717, and formed the first Grand Lodge of England, thereafter known as the Premier Grand Lodge of the world. No longer operative as of old, the Masons carried on the traditions and used the tools of the craft as emblems to symbolize principles of conduct in a continued effort to build a better world.

The American colonial Masonic organizations stemmed from this Grand Lodge of England and were formed soon after 1717. Its then Grand Master appointed Colonel Daniel Coxe as Provincial Grand Master of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania on June 5, 1730, and Henry Price of Boston as Provincial Grand Master of New England in April 1733." -- Henry C. Clausen

(2) What US Presidents have been Masons?

George Washington
James Monroe
Andrew Jackson
James Polk
James Buchanan
Andrew Johnson
James Garfield
William McKinley
Theodore Roosevelt
William Howard Taft
Warren G. Harding
Franklin D. Roosevelt
Harry S. Truman
(Lyndon B. Johnson)
Gerald R. Ford

Notes (in chronological order):

William McKinley's Masonic membership has not been confirmed 100%, though his name does appear on several lists. Hopefully, someone will be able to provide a definitive yes or no.

William Howard Taft was made a Mason At Sight by the Grand Master of Ohio and later raised to Grand Master of Ohio in 1909.

Harry S. Truman was also Grand Master of his home state, Missouri.

Lyndon Johnson was an Entered Apprentice, but never progressed beyond that degree.

Ronald Reagan is not a craft Mason. He was made an honorary 33rd degree Mason by the Southern Jurisdiction of the AASR and an honorary member of the Imperial Council of the Shrine, but he was never entered, passed, and raised as a Mason, nor was he ever made a Mason at sight. (Source: Robinson's _Born in Blood_)

Bill Clinton is not a Mason, though he was involved in DeMolay for a time.

Many other leaders in government have been Masons: "They have included fourteen Presidents and eighteen Vice Presidents of the United States; a majority of the Justices of the United States Supreme Court, of the Governors of States, of the members of the Senate, and a large percentage of the Congressmen. Five Chief Justices of the United States were Masons and two were Grand Masters. The five were Oliver Ellsworth, John Marshall (also Grand Master of Masons in Virginia), William Howard Taft, Frederick M. Vinson and Earl Warren (also Grand Master of Masons in California.)" -- Henry C. Clausen

(3) Was Thomas Jefferson a Mason? Patrick Henry? Abraham Lincoln?

No, no, and no. As for the first two, "an exhaustive search of Masonic records in Virginia, and elsewhere, offers no iota of evidence to make them Freemasons. Jefferson participated in the cornerstone laying of his University at Charlottesville, which was done Masonically. He praised Freemasonry and his own words proved he had never been a member of the Craft."

There is some evidence that Abraham Lincoln intended to become a Mason when he returned to Springfield after his second term in office, had he not been assassinated in 1865.

(4) What famous people have been Masons?

This is by no means a complete list. This list also includes Prince Hall Masons.

From The American Revolution (other than Presidents): Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock, Paul Revere, John Paul Jones, LaFayette, Rufus King, James Otis, Baron von Steuben, Joseph Warren, Benedict Arnold (well, you can't win them all)

Political Leaders: Winston Churchill, Simon Bolivar, Edmund Burke, Benito Juarez, Edward VII, George VI, Bernardo O'Higgins, Jose' de San Martin, Francisco de Paula Santander, Jose'Rizal, Jose' Marti, Pandit Nehru, Lajos Kossuth, Jonas Furrer, Guiseppe Mazzini, Eduard Benes, John A. MacDonald, Aaron Burr, George McGovern, Barry Goldwater, Estes Kefauver, Adlai Stevenson (not the governor of Illinois, but his father who was Vice President in 1892), Thomas E. Dewey, Alf Landon, Hubert H. Humphrey, Wendell Wilke, W.E.B. DuBois, William Jennings Bryant

Military Leaders: Omar Bradley, John J. Pershing, Douglas McArthur, General Winfield Scott, Captain Eddie Rickenbacker, Jimmy Doolittle, General Mark Clark, General George C. Marshall

Republic Of Texas: Sam Houston, Stephen Austin, Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, William B. Travis (and, it should be added, General Santa Ana)

Fine Arts: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (and his father, Leopold), Ludwig von Beethoven, Jean Sibelius, Franz Liszt, Josef Haydn, Irving Berlin, Gutzon Borglum, Charles W. Peale, Alfons M. Mucha, John Philip Sousa, both Gilbert & Sullivan, George Gershwin, George M. Cohen, Count Basie, Nat King Cole, Giacomo Meyerbeer, Signmund Romberg

Actors: John Wayne, Red Skelton, Clark Gable, W.C. Fields, Will Rogers, Burl Ives, Roy Rogers, Danny Thomas, Ernest Borgnine, Oliver Hardy, Tom Mix, Audie Murphy, Gene Autry, Wallace Beery, Eddie Cantor

Industry & Labor: Henry Ford, Samuel Gompers, Walter P. Chrysler, John Wanamaker, S.S. Kresge, J.C. Penney, John Jacob Astor, John L. Lewis

Adventurers: Lewis & Clark, Charles A. Lindberg, Kit Carson, Roald Amundsen, Adm. Richard Byrd, Commodore Robert Peary

Philosophers: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Gotthold E. Lessing, Voltaire (Francois Marie Arouet)

Athletes: Bob Feller, Tris Speaker, Ty Cobb, Paul "Dizzy" Trout, Harry Carey, Dell Rice, Jimmy Fox, Joe Tinker (of "Tinker to Evers to Chance"), Jack Dempsey, Arnold Palmer, Jack Arthur Johnson

Astronauts: Edwin E. "Buzz" Aldrin, Jr., Leroy Gordon Cooper, Donn F. Eisele, Virgil I. Grissom, Edgar D. Mitchell, Walter M. Schirra, Jr., Thomas P. Stafford, Paul J. Weitz, James B. Irwin, John Glenn.

Writers: Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), Sir Walter Scott, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Burns, Wassily I. Maikow, Heinrich Heine, Jean P.C. de Florian, Leopoldo Lugoner, Antonio de Castro Alves, James Boswell, Alexander Pushkin, Arthur Conan Doyle, Johnathon Swift, Oscar Wilde

Law: John Marshall, Earl Warren, Thurgood Marshall

Medicine: Drs. Alexander Fleming, Jules Bordet, Antoine DePage, Edward Jenner, Charles and William Mayo, Karl and William Menninger

Science: Hans C. Orsted, Jons Jakob Frk. von Berzelius, Alfred Edmund Brehm, Luther Burbank, Johan Ernst Gunnerus, Albert Abraham Michelson, Gaspard Monge, C.F.S. Hahnemann, Pedro N. Arata, Alexandre Gustave Eiffel, Alexander Fleming, James Smithson

...as well as Harry Houdini, Norman Vincent Peale, David Sarnoff, Thomas J. Watson, Giuseppe Garibaldi, Cecil J. Rhodes, Marvin Zindler, and many, many more.

(5) What famous buildings in the US have been laid Masonically?

The U. S. Capitol The Smithsonian Institution Jackson Hall The National Education Association Building The Army War College Building House of Representatives Office Building The Washington Monument

The Washington Monument is in Alexandria, Virginia, and honors our first President and Brother Mason, George Washington.

(6) What's the difference between AF&AM and F&AM?

F&AM means "Free & Accepted Masons." AF&AM means "Ancient Free & Accepted Masons". In practical terms, there is no difference, since the jurisdictions that are termed "ancient" F&AM are no different than those that are simply F&AM. The distinction is a historical one, owing to differences in Grand Lodge names.

(7) Was Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon Church, a Mason?

"Joseph Smith was a mason, as were the following four presidents of the LDS church.

From about 1839 to about 1846 most of the members of the church gathered to Nauvoo, Illinois, and there were at least four lodges in operation there. Joseph Smith was a very flamboyant individual and had a disagreement with the Grand Lodge of Illinois over the way the Nauvoo lodges were operated. Accordingly, their charters were revoked by the Grand Lodge.

He was murdered by a mob in 1844, and Brigham Young felt it was as a result of a masonic conspiracy. He prohibited Mormons from being Masons, which remained in effect until the last ten years or so. The ill feelings went both ways, as the Grand Lodge of Utah refused to accept Mormons as members until about 1984.

There are no particular restrictions on Mormons being Masons. We are continually counselled to put our families and Christ first, which many interpret as counsel to avoid most activities outside family and church. This is a personal choice, though, and not a matter of strict doctrine.

We perform certain ordinances such as baptisms for the dead and eternal marriages in our temples, and minor portions of those ordinances bear very surface similarity to parts of the Masonic degrees. The whole scope and character is much different, though. Where (I feel, anyway) that the masonic degree work revolves around our place in God's kingdom here on the earth, our temple rituals deal with creation and our place in the eternities."

(A minor historical note: Smith was made a Mason at Sight by the Grand Master of Illinois)

(8) What is the oldest Lodge Room in the world? In the US?

"St. John's Chapel, Edinburgh, Scotland is said to be the oldest Masonic Lodge Room (1736) in the world. The oldest known Lodge Room in the U.S. is situated in Prentiss House, Marblehead, Massachusetts (1760). The oldest Masonic Lodge Building is the Lodge Hall of Royal White Hart Lodge No. 2, Halifax, North Carolina (1771)."

Other information disagrees with this, stating that the oldest American Lodge Room is "Masons Hall in Richmond, Virginia, the home of Richmond Randolph Lodge No. 19 and Richmond Royal Arch Chapter No. 3. The building owned by Royal White Hart Lodge wasn't built until 1821. Masons Hall was built in 1785. It was originally the home of Richmond Lodge No. 10, the first wholly new Lodge chartered by the Grand Lodge of Virginia. It was also the first permanent home of the Grand Lodge of Virginia."

(9) Is it true that all of George Washington's generals during the Revolutionary War were Masons?

No. 33 of the generals serving under Washington were Masons. A substantial number, but not "all".

(10) Is it true that all the signers of the Declaration of Independence were Masons? The Articles of Confederation? The Constitution?

No. Masons constituted ten of the signers of the Articles, nine signers of the Declaration, and thirteen signers of the Constitution.

Additionally, Edmund Randolph, Grand Master of Virginia, was an active participant at the Constitutional Convention, though he didn't sign the document. It should also be noted that four Presidents of the Continental Congresses were Freemasons: Peyton Randolph of Virginia, John Hancock of Massachusetts, Henry Laurens of South Carolina, and Arthur St. Clair of Pennsylvania.

(11) George Washington turned down the title of "Grand Master of the United States"-- true?

Yes, sort of. The American Union Lodge proposed that Washington become "General Grand Master of the United States", a title to be held in the "National Grand Lodge". However, there were many others who also disagreed with the idea, so it was never a serious proposal.

Washington was Master of Alexandria Lodge No. 22 in Virginia, whose Grand Master was then Edmund Randolph. Washington was never Grand Master of Virginia (or any other jurisdiction).

(12) Why do some Lodges meet on a certain day of the week "following the full moon"? Are Masons some kind of moon worshippers?

The reason is actually simple practicality. Masonic Lodges meet at night, since their membership typically works during the day. Before street lights were available in the 19th century, men walked to Lodge in the dark of night and it was common to schedule Lodge meetings shortly after a full moon to provide maximum illumination for Brothers' walk to and from Lodge.

Obviously, this is no longer an issue, though some Lodges whose history stretches back into the 19th century or earlier still schedule their meetings by the moon's period. These are sometimes referred to as "moon Lodges".

(13) Did Masons suffer at the hands of the Nazis?

Yes. The exact numbers are unknown. Lt. Col. David Boyd wrote that 85,000 German Masons were killed by the Nazis, though other research has found that this number may be off by as much as a third. This figure does not include any of the nations the Nazis occupied.

Regardless of the actual number killed, it is clear that Hitler viewed Freemasonry, which exalts truth, toleration, brotherly love, and free thought, to be dangerous and a threat to his regime. Ironically, in his last days in his bunker in Berlin, Hitler had a painting of Frederick the Great in his chambers. Frederick the Great was a Mason.

(14) Are Masons connected to Greek-letter fraternities?

(15) I want information on Masonic history. What books would be good introductions?

Virtually anything by Allen Roberts.

Robinson, John J. _A Pilgrim's Path_ Robinson, John J. _Born in Blood_

Stevenson, David, PhD. _The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland's Century 1590-1710_ (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia is an excellent reference.

(16) My local Library doesn't have any books on Freemasonry, where can I find them?

Many Lodges maintain their own libraries as do the Grand Lodges. Some larger public Libraries also may have a better collection than a smaller Library. Unfortunately, bookstores do not typically carry a wide assortment of Masonic related books, however, there are several sources to purchase books:

Macoy Publishing (804) 262-6551 P.O. Box 9759 Richmond, VA 23228

Anchor Communications (804) 737-4498 110 Quince Ave. Drawer 70 Highland Springs, VA 23075

(17) What movies/books feature Freemasonry?

National Treasure, story about Benjamin Franklin Gates, who has known that he is descended from a long line of people whose job is to guard a treasure hidden by masons and the Founding Fathers. They then hid clues to its whereabouts in the country's currency and on the back of the Declaration of Independence. Now, he has learned of a plot to steal the Declaration, and has only one option: steal it himself. Even if he pulls off this monumental task, keeping the treasure safe is still going to be incredibly hard, especially since the FBI has also gotten wind of the scheme. This film is full of and makes many references to Masonry (all fanciful, of course).

From Hell, a story about the Jack the Ripper murders, and the movie is based on a book, and presents the allegations, that "the Ripper" was actually a Freemason, who worked with other Masons to murder and mutilate women who knew secrets about the British Royal family that could have caused the public to be upset with them and with the Freemasons who were in high government positions. Masonic rituals are shown, as are men wearing Masonic aprons and jewels, and Masonic rings. This is an antimasonic movie.

Like Water for Chocolate, Masonic funeral is clearly enacted

The Man Who Would Be King, by Brother Rudyard Kipling. A good story, later made into an excellent film, starring Michael Caine, Sean Connery, and Christopher Plummer. Its portrayal of Masonic history is quite fanciful, of course.

Murder by Decree A Sherlock Holmes movie, concerning the Master Sleuth's hunt for Jack the Ripper. It does not portray Freemasonry in an honest, accurate, or favorable light. A good movie, but it is important to remember that no Mason would ever knowingly commit a crime for a Brother. Incidentally, Edward VII was actually a Mason. (The story is not one of Brother Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's).

The "Turmgesellschaft" in Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister" novels is certainly of Masonic origin.

In Tolstoy's "War and Peace", the Masonic initiation ritual of the character Pierre Besouchoff is described in great detail.

There is also a modest body of Masonic poetry: Kipling's "The Palace" and "Mother Lodge," Burns's "Masonic Farewell," Goethe's "Mason Lodge," Leigh Hunt's "Abou Ben Adhem," Carruth's "Each in His Own Tongue," Burns's "On the Apron," Meredith's "Ebony Staff of Solomon," Bowman's "Voice of America," Malloch's "Father's Lodge" and Nesbit's "I Sat in Lodge with You." (Carl H. Claudy)