

# TAKING THE HERO'S JOURNEY: An Introduction



Everyone takes the Hero's Journey to some degree. Most of the time we aren't aware of it. On the following pages, you can consciously move through the stages of the Hero's Journey by clicking on the stages.

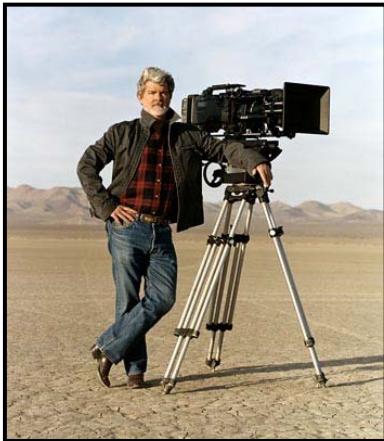
Throughout this section, while describing each particular stage, I will try to enhance the experience with example quotes and scene descriptions from popular stories. Most of the examples may stem from the film medium, since it is a popular, easily accessible, medium and often lends itself to quick analysis.

**"If you go looking for Adventure, you usually find as much of it as you can manage. And it often happens that when you think it is ahead, it comes on you unexpectedly from behind."**

**- J.R.R. Tolkien**

## How does this Hero's Journey work for my class?

This thematic curriculum, which we will use to the pattern of the heroic journey, is a foundation for studying and understanding all the literature you read, the films you



watch, and the experiences you encounter. Our focus will be on curriculum emphasizes writing and collaborative learning through character analysis, short story writing, group presentations and a reflective essay. The Hero's Journey is the pattern of human experience. It underlies virtually all literature and film, making it an ideal framework for learning British Literature. If you begin to understand the archetype and learn to see literature and film as "modern myths," stories which both reflect and direct human experience, then with this Hero's Journey guide, I hope that you will find new meaning in literature and in life.

**"I have a strong feeling about interesting people in space exploration...And the only way its going to happen is to have some kid fantasize about getting his ray gun, jumping into his spaceship, and flying into outer space."**

**George Lucas  
CREATOR OF STAR WARS**

## So? Whom are we getting all this from?



Perhaps the best-known comparative mythologist of this age, Joseph Campbell was born March 26, 1904, in New York, to a middle class, Roman Catholic family. As a child he saw, and was enchanted with, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show; subsequently he developed, while still a youth, a keen interest in Native American cultures and mythologies. As he grew up and as his education continued, this early fascination with culture and myth expanded to include the myths of many cultures worldwide – it could well be said of him that he “followed his bliss,” something he would ultimately exhort his readers and students to do.

His education – he studied at Dartmouth, Columbia, and the Universities of Paris and Munich – was extensive, including linguistic, anthropological and literary studies. He was well-traveled, and had an open and inquisitive mind. In the course of his studies, he came to feel that there was a strong commonality linking the various myths and legends of disparate lands and cultures. Campbell believed that myth was universal, because it sprang from the common imagination of the collective unconscious. He went so far as to enumerate the particular themes and features that different myths shared, theorizing, in the case of these heroic myths, the standard storyline which he called the monomyth. In his seminal book *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, he mapped the universal Hero's Journey in detail, using as example myths from many cultures and traditions.

However, since Campbell uses some specialized technical terms that require going back to his examples in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* to find out what he's talking about, I've taken the liberty of amending his outline. After all every story-teller bends the myth to his own purpose.

## What do we mean by Myth?

A myth is a sacred narrative explaining aspects of human life and the world we live in. Most cultures, for instance, from ancient times through the present, have creation stories which tell how the world came to be. These stories are sacred in more than one respect: they are sacred in that they frequently deal with deities and divine mysteries, and they are sacred in that they are worthy of reverence and respect.

In modern usage, the word myth has acquired an additional, negative meaning – we often hear the word used to denote falsehood, as in That's just a myth. This use of the word is ironic because myth – in the sense in which we are discussing it here, as a sacred narrative – is something that transcends any assessment of true/false. Myths speak to us in symbolic and metaphoric language. The stories are meaningful and poetic, rich in truths about human life.

# The Monomyth of the Hero

In the course of analyzing the myths and lore of various world cultures, mythologist Joseph Campbell saw an underlying similarity throughout the stories, and in fact perceived and articulated a storyline-structure he believed to be universal for hero-myths. This storyline he called the monomyth.

Here is an outline of the basic structure of the universal hero's monomyth, as Campbell discussed it in his book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*: Not only does the monomythic structure apply to classical Hero mythology, it can often be applied to modern stories, also.

**The hero symbolizes a man's unconscious self, and this manifests itself empirically as the sum total of all archetypes and therefore includes the archetype of the father and of the wise old man. To that extent the hero is his own father and his own begetter.**

– C. G. Jung

## I. Departure

- The Call to Adventure
- Refusal of the Call
- Supernatural Aid
- The Crossing of the First Threshold
- The Belly of the Whale

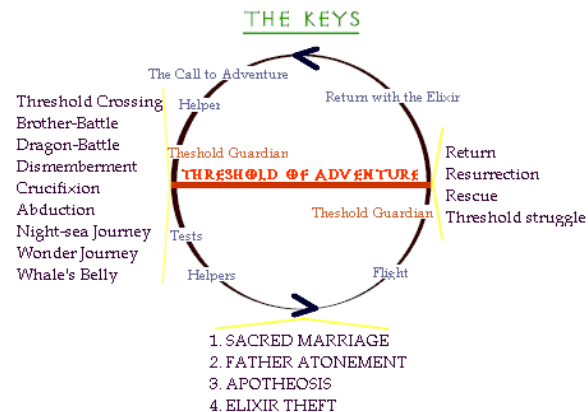
## II. Initiation

- The Road of Trials
- The Meeting with the Goddess
- Woman as the Temptress
- Atonement with the Father
- Apotheosis
- The Ultimate Boon

## III. Return

- Refusal of the Return
- The Magic Flight
- Rescue from Without
- The Crossing of the Return Threshold
- Master of the Two Worlds
- Freedom to Live

## THE HERO'S JOURNEY



\* FROM: THE HERO WITH A THOUSAND FACES  
BY: Joseph Campbell

<Details of each part is explained briefly in Worksheet 3>

# How to Read a Myth: Joseph Campbell's Ten Commandments for Reading Mythology



1. Read myths with the eyes of wonder: the myths transparent to their universal meaning, their meaning transparent to its mysterious source.
2. Read myths in the present tense: Eternity is now.
3. Read myths in the first person plural: the Gods and Goddesses of ancient mythology still live within you.
4. Any myth worth its salt exerts a powerful magnetism. Notice the images and stories that you are drawn to and repelled by. Investigate the field of associated images and stories.
5. Look for patterns; don't get lost in the details. What is needed is not more specialized scholarship, but more interdisciplinary vision. Make connections; break old patterns of thought.
6. Resacralize the secular: even a dollar bill reveals the imprint of Eternity.
7. If God is everywhere, then myths can be generated anywhere, anytime, by anything. Don't let your Romantic aversion to science blind you to the Buddha in the computer chip.
8. Know your tribe! Myths never arise in a vacuum; they are the connective tissue of the social body which enjoys synergistic relations with dreams (private myths) and rituals (the enactment of a myth).
9. Expand your horizon! Any mythology worth remembering will be global in scope. The earth is our home and humankind is our family.
10. Read between the lines! Literalism kills; imagination quickens.

## Why Study Myth?

Myths offer us a metaphorical map of human experience. The heroic quest belongs to each of us, just as it belongs to Taliesin, Inanna, Merlin, Gilgamesh. Our lives are a process, a journey consisting of challenges to be faced, trials to be endured, and adventures to be had.

*What's the good of a man  
Unless there's the glimpse of a god in him?  
And what's the good of a woman  
Unless she's a glimpse of a goddess of some sort?*

- D. H. Lawrence



## The Monomyth: A comparison

Campbell	Star Wars	The Matrix
<b>I: Departure</b>		
The call to adventure	Princess Leia's message	"Follow the white rabbit"
Refusal of the call	Must help with the harvest	Neo won't climb out window
Supernatural aid	Obi-wan rescues Luke from sandpeople	Trinity extracts the "bug" from Neo
Crossing the first threshold	Escaping Tatooine	Agents capture Neo
The belly of the whale	Trash compactor	Torture room
<b>II: Initiation</b>		
The road of trials	Lightsaber practice	Sparring with Morpheus
The meeting with the goddess	Princess Leia	Trinity
Temptation away from the true path <sup>1</sup>	Luke is tempted by the Dark Side	Cypher (the failed messiah) is tempted by the world of comfortable illusions
Atonement with the Father	Darth and Luke reconcile	Neo rescues and comes to agree (that he's The One) with his father-figure, Morpheus
Apotheosis (becoming god-like)	Luke becomes a Jedi	Neo becomes The One
The ultimate boon	Death Star destroyed	Humanity's salvation now within reach

### III: Return

Refusal of the return	"Luke, come on!" Luke wants to stay to avenge Obi-Wan	Neo fights agent instead of running
The magic flight	Millennium Falcon	"Jacking in"
Rescue from without	Han saves Luke from Darth	Trinity saves Neo from agents
Crossing the return threshold	Millennium Falcon destroys pursuing TIE fighters	Neo fights agent Smith
Master of the two worlds	Victory ceremony	Neo's declares victory over machines in final phone call
Freedom to live	Rebellion is victorious over Empire	Humans are victorious over machines

### Common Mythic Elements

Two Worlds (mundane and special)	Planetside vs. The Death Star	Reality vs. The Matrix
The Mentor	Obi-Wan Kenobi	Morpheus
The Oracle	Yoda	The Oracle
The Prophecy	Luke will overthrow the Emperor	Morpheus will find (and Trinity will fall for) "The One"
Failed Hero	Biggs	In an early version of the script, Morpheus once believed that Cypher was "The One"
Wearing Enemy's Skin	Luke and Han wear stormtrooper outfits	Neo jumps into agent's skin
Shapeshifter (the Hero isn't sure if he can trust this character)	Han Solo	Cypher
Animal familiar	R2-D2, Chewbacca	N/A
Chasing a lone animal into the enchanted wood (and the animal gets away)	The Millennium Falcon follows a lone TIE fighter into range of the Death Star	Neo "follows the white rabbit" to the nightclub where he meets Trinity

*"FOR OVER ONE HUNDRED YEARS, science fiction stories and films have stimulated the imaginations of many scientists in the forefront of discovery, encouraged young people to choose the sciences as a career, and shaped our visions and expectations of future space travel. Among all of these science fiction tales, the Star Wars trilogy has proven to be a very special inspiration."*

STAR WARS IS ESPECIALLY MEMORABLE because its story of spacefaring pilots and their daring escapades is based on an ancient form of mythology--the "hero's journey."

## **Worksheet 1: The Hero in You**

1. Describe a time when you were heroic.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Was this a spontaneous act or something that you thought about for some time?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What were the obstacles to your success? Were there any foes?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Was there someone older, wiser, or more experienced who was able to help you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Were your affections involved? If so, toward whom?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What do you think were those qualities in you that helped you to act so heroically?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. If you were to compare yourself to any other hero, who would it be?

## Worksheet 2: Independent Film Viewing

**MOVIE NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

View one or more films depicting a quest. Answer the following questions:

1.   a. What qualities does the hero possess that make him heroic?  
  
  
  
  
      b. In what respect does he deviate from the classical definition of a hero?
2. Map the hero's journey, using **Worksheet 3: *The Heroic Journey*** as a guide.
3. Describe the villains or monsters that the hero must vanquish.
4.   a. Describe the role of the outside intervention (e.g., the supernatural, a wise elder, witch) in allowing the hero to be successful in his quest.  
  
  
  
  
      b. Would the hero have been successful on his own?

### Optional Questions for a Senior Advanced Audience

1. It has been said that a hero and his quest personify the dreams and desires of the society that spawned this hero. Given that premise, what values seem to be important to the society reflected in your film?



### WORKSHEET 3: The Heroic Journey

*"A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself"*

*-- Joseph Campbell*

Joseph Campbell The Hero with a Thousand Faces The Hero's Journey Chart	
<b>Movie:</b>	
<b>Separation</b>	
<b>Call to Adventure:</b> How does the character receive the call to adventure?	
<b>Refusal of the Call:</b> Does the character accept the call immediately?	
<b>Answering the Call:</b> What motivates the character to accept the call?	
<b>Supernatural Aid</b>	
<b>Guide/Mentor:</b> Is there a specific character who helps the hero understand the life situation or provides the hero with special training?	
<b>Talisman:</b> Is there a particular item that has special significance to the hero?	
<b>Companions:</b> Who is with the hero on his journey? How do these companions help the hero face the challenges?	

<b>Crossing the Threshold:</b> At what point in the story does the hero leave the familiar world and move into a new, unfamiliar circumstance?	
<b>Threshold Guardians:</b> Are there characters that try to prevent the hero from crossing over into the unfamiliar territory or circumstance?	
<b>Initiation / Road of Trials:</b> What specific challenges does the hero face?	
<b>Brother Battle:</b> Does the hero battle physically or mentally with someone who is a relative or close friend?	
<b>Meeting with the Goddess:</b> Does the hero meet with a character with special beauty and power?	
<b>Abduction:</b> Is the character kidnapped, or is someone close to the hero kidnapped?	
<b>Night or Sea Journey:</b> Where do the hero's travels take him?	
<b>Dragon Battle:</b> Does the hero battle some kind of monster? Does the hero have to face some inner demon?	
<b>Ritual Death or Dismemberment:</b> Is the hero injured and thought to be dead? Does the hero mistakenly believe someone close to him is	

dead? Does the hero suffer an injury in which he loses a limb or use of some other body part?	
<b>Sacred Marriage:</b> Does the hero have a special emotional bond (it could literally be a marriage) with another character?	
<b>Atonement (“at one with”) with or Recognition by the Father:</b> Is the hero reunited with his father in some way?	
<b>Entering the Belly of the Whale:</b> Is there some point in the story where the hero must face his deepest fear or the darkest evil in the story?	
<b>Apotheosis (Deification):</b> Is there a point in the story where the hero is held up as an ideal or where the hero is worshipped as a god?	
<b>Ultimate Boon / Magic Elixir:</b> Does the hero find some special solution to the problem he is attempting to resolve? This might be a magic potion or a key to something.	
<b>The Return</b>	
<b>Refusal of the Return:</b> Does the hero initially refuse to return to the homeland or the place that he began the journey?	

<b>Magic Flight / Pursuit:</b> Is there some point (generally toward the end) where the hero is being chased or is otherwise trying to escape something?	
<b>Rescue from Without:</b> Is there so point in the movie, when all seems hopeless, when it looks like the hero is going to die, then suddenly he is rescued unexpectedly?	
<b>Crossing the Return Threshold:</b> Is there some point where the hero clearly returns "home"?	
<b>Master of Two Worlds:</b> Does it appear that the hero has conquered life in both the familiar and unfamiliar worlds?	
<b>Freedom to Live:</b> Since the hero typically begins the journey to resolve a problem, does it appear the problem is at last resolved so that all can live freely?	

**NOTE:**

*THE **STAR WARS** TRILOGY ENDS WITH GOOD WINNING OUT. MUST GOOD WIN OVER EVIL ALL OF THE TIME? WHAT DOES THE VICTORY SAY ABOUT WHAT THE "BEOWULF" SCOP BELIEVED?*

*THE RELEASE OF **EPISODES I-III** COMPLETES THE CYCLE. EPISODE III, **REVENGE OF THE SITH**, OF COURSE DRAMATIZES THE DARK SIDE OF THE FORCE, WITH DARTH VADER EMERGING FROM THE INNOCENCE OF THE ANGELIC ANAKIN SKYWALKER, BUT ON HER DEATHBED AFTER GIVING BIRTH TO LUKE AND LEIA, PADME NOTES THAT THERE IS YET SOME GOOD IN HER HUSBAND, AS LUKE WILL REMARK MUCH LATER.*

## Incoming Advanced and A.P. 11th Grade English

Padraic Colum's Nordic Gods and Heroes.

For this book you will keep a double-entry journal (see example below).

- You will be required to make 10 double-journal entries for the book.
- You will put quotes on the left side and reflective responses on the right side of each page.
- You may choose the chapters from which to journalize, but they must be representative of the entire novel.
- Please remember that these are to be your insightful reactions to the characters, conflicts, issues, etc. for that chapter, not summaries.
- You will turn in both journals upon your return to school in August, and your teacher will choose one to grade. You will take a test in class on the other book.

**Double-Entry Journal:** Models Responding to the text: Draw a line down the middle of a page. On the left side, copy a meaningful passage from the book you're reading – perhaps a bit of dialogue, a description, or a character's thought. (Be sure to note the number of the page you copied it from – you or somebody else may want to find it later.) On the right side, write your response to the quotation. Why did you choose it? Did it puzzle you? Confuse you? Strike a chord? What does it mean to you?

### EXAMPLES:

<p><b>Quotation</b></p> <p>"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." (Page 1) example is from <i>Pride and Prejudices</i></p>	<p><b>Response</b></p> <p>This is the first sentence of the book. When I first read it I thought the writer was serious – it seemed like something people might have believed when it was written. Soon I realized she was making fun of that attitude. I wondered how much of the novel was written in that same way, and if I would understand the author's humor. It is not too obvious. Will the entire story be about finding a good wife or husband?</p>
<p><b>Quotation</b></p> <p>"But to her unaccustomed vision the stretch of water behind her assumed the aspect of a barrier which her unaided strength would never be able to overcome." (Page 89) example is from <i>The Awakening</i></p>	<p><b>Response</b></p> <p>The distance between Edna and the shore symbolizes the distance she will put between herself and society, if she embarks on her quest for self. In this moment, such a distance seems insurmountable and dangerous to her, which speaks to how difficult her personal journey is going to be. I wonder if she will ever overcome her fear and accomplish learning to swim. At this point, also, I see this as a symbol of her independence and, perhaps, freedom from her stifling life as wife and mother in society as it exists in her day. But what can she do about it?</p>

For your third book, you may choose one novel from the titles listed below. Each one is worth a point value, you may choose to read as many as you would like to receive a maximum extra credit point score of 15. **When you enter class in August, you will be bringing Worksheets 1-3 along with the 10 journals. For each book on this list you read, you MUST write 1 journal answering the question: "How do the themes of this book apply to my world". This will constitute your first evaluative grade for the class.**

1. *Chronicles of Narnia* by CS Lewis (1 pt each)
2. *Murder on the Orient Express* by Agatha Christie (1 pt)
3. *Pygmalion* by George B. Shaw (2 pt)
4. *The Hobbit* by Tolkien (1 pt)
5. *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* by C Doyle (3 pt)
6. *Brave New World* by Aldus Huxley (3 pt)
7. *Scarlet Pimpernel* by Orczy (3 pt)
8. *Three Musketeers* by A Dumas (4 pt)
9. *Faust* by Goethe (5 pt)
10. *Emma* by Jane Austen (5 pt)
11. *Gulliver's Travels* by J. Swift (5 pt)
12. *Rob Roy* by W. Scott (5 pt)
13. *Fahrenheit 451* by Bradbury (3 pt)
14. *Dracula* by B Stoker (4 pt)
15. *Tarzan* by E Burroughs (4 pt)
16. *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles (4 pt)
17. *Pride and Prejudice* by J Austen (4 pt)
18. *Jane Eyre* by C Bronte (5 pt)
19. *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* by Mark Twain (2)
20. *Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde (4)