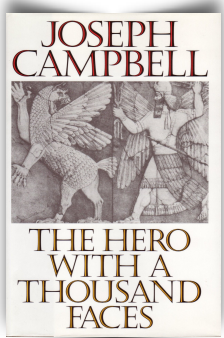


The hero's journey



The theory of the monomyth developed by Joseph Campbell

Treasure, love, reward, approval, honor, status, freedom, survival ... these are some of the many things we associate with the hero's journey. We don't find the meaning of the hero's journey in slaying the dragon or saving the princess—these are colorful metaphors and symbols for a more significant purpose. Battling inner and outer demons, confronting bullies, and courting your ultimate mate symbolize a passage through the often-treacherous tunnel of self-discovery and individuation to mature adulthood. At the end of each journey (if there is such an end), you're different—sometimes visually, but always internally.



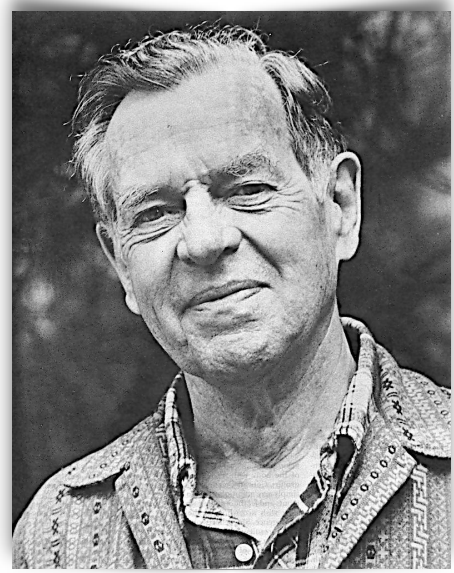
What is the Hero's journey?

Joseph Campbell was a curious mythologist. In the field of comparative mythology, most scholars invested their time exploring how one culture's myths were different than another. Campbell, however, saw things differently. Instead of focusing on the many differences between cultural myths and religious stories, he looked for the similarities. And his studies resulted in what's called the monomyth .

The monomyth is a universal story structure. It's a kind of story template that takes a character through a sequence of stages.

The main character in the monomyth is the hero . The hero isn't a person, but an archetype, a set of universal images combined with specific patterns of behavior. Think of a protagonist from your favorite film. He or she was the hero. The film represented the hero's journey. The hero archetype resides in the psyche of every individual, which is one of the primary reasons we love hearing and watching stories.

Campbell began identifying the patterns of this monomyth. Over and over again, he was amazed to find this structure in the cultures he studied. He saw the same sequence in many religions including the stories of Gautama Buddha, Moses, and Jesus Christ. Campbell outlined the stages of the monomyth in his classic « The Hero with a Thousand Faces ».



Joseph Campbell



Why is the Hero's Journey relevant to us?

We might ask, why explore the Hero's Journey? Sure, Hollywood uses it as their dominant story structure for its films, but what relevance does it have for us as individuals?

Today, when we speak of "myth," we refer to something that's commonly believed, but untrue. Myth, for people like Campbell and Jung however, had a much higher meaning. Myths, for them, represent dreams of the collective psyche. That is, in understanding the symbolic meaning of a myth, you come to know the psychological undercurrent, including hidden motivations, tensions, and desires, of the people. And because the hero's journey represents a monomyth that we can observe in most, if not all, cultures, it represents a process that is relevant to the entire human family.

What is this process? It's the process of personal transformation from an innocent child into a mature adult. The child is born into a set of rules and beliefs of a group of people, and through the child's heroic efforts he must break free of these conventions (transcend them), and discover him or herself. And in the process, the individual returns to his or her soul.

5

5

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The three main stages of the Hero's Journey

Stage 1: Separation (thesis)

Campbell called the initial stage Departure. The hero departs from the world he knows. In the Departure stage, you leave the safety of the world you know and enter the unknown .

Stage 2: Initiation (antithesis)

Now the hero must face a series of trials and tribulations. The hero's journey isn't safe. The hero is tested in battle, skill, and conflict. The hero may not succeed in each action, but the hero must press on regardless. The hero will meet allies, enemies, and mentors with supernatural aid throughout the initiation stage.

Stage 3: Return (synthesis)

Having endured the trials and hardships of the adventure, the hero returns home. But the hero is no longer the same. An internal transformation has taken place through the maturation process of the experience.

Campbell's legacy to the film industry

The ideas expressed in Campbell's book are having a major impact on storytelling. Writers are becoming more aware of the ageless patterns which Campbell identifies, and are enriching their work with them. Inevitably Hollywood has caught on to the usefulness of Campbell's work. Filmmakers like George Lucas and George Miller acknowledge their debt to Campbell and his influence can be seen in the films of Steven Spielberg, John Boorman, Francis Coppola, and others.

These tools have stood the test of time. They are older than the Pyramids, older than Stonehenge, older than the earliest cave paintings.

Joseph Campbell's contribution to the tool kit was to gather the ideas together, recognize them, articulate them, name them, organize them. He exposed for the first time the pattern that lies behind every story ever told.

The Hero with a Thousand Faces is his statement of the most persistent theme in oral tradition and recorded literature: the myth of the hero. In his study of world hero myths Campbell discovered that they are all basically the same story, retold endlessly in infinite variation.

Stories built on the model of the Hero's Journey have an appeal that can be felt by everyone, because they well up from a universal source in the shared unconscious and reflect universal concerns.

They deal with the childlike universal questions: Who am I? Where did I come from? Where will I go when I die? What is good and what is evil? What must I do about it? What will tomorrow be like? Where did yesterday go? Is there anybody else out there?

Christopher Vogler, *The Writer's Journey*

Christopher Vogler's adaptation of the Hero's Journey

- Stage 1
 - 1. ORDINARY WORLD
 - 2. CALL TO ADVENTURE
 - 3. REFUSAL OF THE CALL
 - 4. MEETING WITH THE MENTOR
 - 5. CROSSING THE FIRST THRESHOLD
- Stage 2
 - 6. TESTS; ALLIES, ENEMIES
 - 7. APPROACH TO THE INMOST CAVE
 - 8. SUPREME ORDEAL
 - 9. REWARD (SEIZING THE SWORD)
- Stage 3
 - 10. THE ROAD BACK
 - 11. RESURRECTION
 - 12. RETURN (WITH THE ELIXIR)



Screenwriting consultant **Christopher Vogler** discovered Joseph Campbell's work while studying cinema at USC. He wrote a paper exploring the mythological patterns that made the original *Star Wars* film such a great success.

In 1985, as a story analyst for Disney, Vogler organized his research into a seven-page memo called "A Practical Guide to Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*." In the memo's introduction, he calls Campbell's ideas "an excellent set of analytical tools" with which writers and editors can "almost always determine what's wrong with a story that's floundering." He used Campbell's summary of the hero's journey in Chapter IV of *Hero* as his model.



Answer the online quiz

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Modern Mythology

and the hero's journey

by Joseph Campbell

What is the Hero's Journey?

1. Introduce the document.
2. What is specific about Joseph Campbell's research?
 - How did he call his discovery?
3. Who is the main character of the monomyth?

Why is the Hero's Journey relevant to us?

4. Why is it interesting to study and understand the theory of the monomyth?
 - What does it reveal about most people?

Campbell's legacy to the film industry

5. In what way has Joseph Campbell's work influenced our modern way of telling stories?
 - Quote examples of filmmakers who have been using his method.
6. According to Christopher Vogler, what is Joseph Campbell's contribution to the storytellers?
7. Why is the hero's journey appealing to so many people?
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