

Joseph Campbell's "The Hero Journey"

- It is as much as a physical journey as it is an emotional and spiritual journey*
- It is a journey toward self-knowledge.
- Not all of the events will occur in each hero's journey. The steps don't always appear in their exact order.

Departure (Separation)

The Ordinary World:

- This is the hero's home environment where his friends and family are located. The story starts here so that the separation becomes apparent. This is the land of the "mother" where the hero feels comfortable. Note that this does not necessarily have to be a safe environment as long as the hero feels connected to the land/people/surroundings.

Call to Adventure:

- There is an awakening of the "self to an unknown, unexpected world. The hero becomes aware of a new, unusual, exciting, forbidden, and/or foreign world.
- The hero outgrows his old world. The old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time for passing the threshold is at hand.
- Sometimes, chance reveals an unexpected world; therefore, the hero is forced to leave (which may cause some anxiety.)

Refusal of the Call:

- Often the hero feels that he/she has it "too good" and refuses to give up all that they currently have (often resulting in the hero being forced to move on).
- The hero doesn't understand that the refusal of the call means a refusal to move on in life.
- The hero views his present system of ideals, virtues, goals, and advantages as fixed and secure, or the hero is waiting for the perfect call.

- Often times the refusal will be encouraged by another character. Obviously, the call will eventually be answered but it is important to recognize all the forces working to keep the character at "status quo."

Supernatural Aid:

- This can come in the form of a protective figure, usually an elder (old crone or old man.)
- Provides the hero with something (physical or mental) which will help the hero move forward in his adventure. Perhaps a sword to fight the dragon or a confidence boost to help the hero believe in him/herself.
- Supernatural figures represent a benign, protecting power of destiny.
- Represent the forces of the unconscious at the hero's side.

Crossing the Threshold:

- The hero ventures into an unknown world which breaks tradition, and the hero meets some dangerous presence.
- The hero encounters a "threshold guardian" at the entrance to the zone of magnified power. This guardian stands in the way of the hero moving on to the next area.
- Beyond the entrance to this zone is darkness, the unknown, and danger (desert, jungle, deep sea, alien land, etc.)

In the Belly of the Whale:

- Once the hero has crossed the threshold, his old world is destroyed (literally or figuratively). He/she moves into a world of darkness (the belly of the whale) and will not come out until he/she is ready to return (so the hero stays in the belly of the whale through all of initiation). Often times there will be a "deepest part" to the belly.
- This stage gets its name from the Jonah story. It is a sphere of rebirth, a realm of darkness; the hero is swallowed into an unknown, womb-like darkness (representing the unconscious).

- The hero goes inward (into his own mind) in order to be "reborn."

Initiation

The Road of Trials:

- Hero experiences miraculous tests or ordeals on the road of trials. There are usually several incidents that affect the hero at this point. The hero will appear weak and vulnerable, but he/she will also begin to show growth.
- The hero finds parts of himself he was unaware of and assimilates his unexpected self (psyche).
- The "item" that the supernatural aid has given the hero will now start to become useful.

The Meeting with the Goddess:

- The hero meets a "goddess" that shows him/her what perfection is truly like. The hero witnesses all that can be accomplished and often times, his/her mission becomes much clearer. The goddess encourages the hero to continue.
- This goddess may be a physical person or may be some feminine symbol.

The Woman as the Temptress:

- The hero meets a presence that attempts to destroy the hero's mission. Often the temptress is sent by the evil forces working against the hero in order to try to stop the hero.
- The hero is misled into giving up. "This is the easy way out." "Stop now or you will be destroyed." "Join us; you will be happy here."

Atonement with the Father;

- Father symbolizes judgment; the hero overcomes fear, judgment, and mental blocks that may have been holding him/her back.
- This stage shows growth and the ability to take on adult responsibilities.
- Movement from the realm of mother to that of the father.

Apotheosis:

- The hero is in a divine, god-like state (ecstasy). The hero goes beyond the last terrors of ignorance.
- Hero recognizes the "**big picture**" (spiritual understanding can be known). The hero finally understands why he/she has been on his/her journey. The journey is not over, but the hero understands what it takes to return.
- The hero becomes free from all fear, beyond the reach of change.

The Ultimate Boon:

- The hero receives the prize that he/she has been after.
- The boon may come in the form of physical rewards (like the dragon's treasure), but will more importantly include a mental/emotional reward (like inner peace).

Return

Refusal of the Return:

- The hero should bring their wisdom back to their kingdom of humanity. The hero often wishes to remain in isolation with his boon.
- Hero can refuse a return; attains or experiences a symbolic "death."
- Rarely will a true refusal occur, but often times the temptation to refuse a return is evident.

Magic in Flight (The Chase):

- The hero has his reward, now he must return to safety. There may be forces still working against him/her (possibly trying to get the treasure back that the hero has taken). A "chase" ensues.
- The hero usually appears as a changed person by this time. Their final chase is characterized by the hero's confidence and bravery.

Rescue from Without:

- The world may have to come to retrieve the hero. Attaining the boon has drained the hero and he/she needs assistance in returning.

- This is sometimes a blow to the hero's ego, but the hero will recover because he sees the big picture and have accomplished a great deed.

Crossing the Return Threshold;

- There is a difficulty in the hero's return; the world has changed and so has the hero. The hero may not be accepted back to his old world. He may feel awkward in his immediate return.
- The returning hero must survive the impact of the world; he may not be able to verbalize the wisdom he has gained through his journey.
- The hero conquers the difficulty in returning, showing that he/she is able to adapt.

Master of Two Worlds:

- Hero has attained wisdom in both the spiritual and material world (conscious world).
- The hero gives up completely all attachment to his personal limitations, hopes and fears.
- The hero no longer tries to live, but willingly relaxes to whatever may come to pass in him.
- The boon that the hero brings restores the world.

Freedom to Live:

- The hero reconciles the fact the every creature lives on the death of another. The hero understands that it was only through the "death" of his/her former self that the new life was able to surface.
- The hero learns never to be afraid of the next moment (destruction or change), he has learned "to be" (exist).

Common Archetypes in the Hero Journey

1. Hero: he represents the ego's search for identity and wholeness. The hero must sacrifice for the betterment of his society. The hero must transcend the boundaries of the ego and incorporate all aspects of their personality into the Self.
2. Mentor (Wise old man or woman): usually a positive figure who aids or trains the hero. The mentor may teach, give gifts, or act as the higher moral conscience of the hero.
3. Threshold Guardians: represent obstacles that the hero must overcome as they cross into new worlds. They are menacing, but they can be bypassed or overcome by the worthy hero.
4. Herald: a force that brings a challenge to the hero. A herald will issue a challenge and announce the coming of significant change. This challenge or announcement shifts the hero's balance, and forces him to make a life changing decision.
5. Shapeshifter: an elusive archetype, often of the opposite sex, who constantly changes from the hero's point of view. They may mislead the hero, and their loyalty or sincerity is constantly in question. Shapeshifters may often appear in disguise or masks.
6. Shadow: represents the energy of the dark side; the unexpressed, unrealized, or rejected aspects of something. Shadows are the things humans do not want to admit about themselves (stored in the unconscious.) The Shadow is often projected onto villains, antagonists, or enemies
7. Trickster: embodies the energy of mischief and the desire for change. Clowns and comical sidekicks often represent this archetype.