The Hero’s Journey

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| --- |
| **Home****A Safe Place - A Comfort Zone** |
| **Unusual Conception and/or Birth** |
| **The Call to Adventure or Serve**The hero's journey begins when the hero becomes aware of the world outside his home or town where he/she has lived for his entire life. He/she may be given notice that everything is about to change. His journey is usually given to him by a herald who may help the hero by acting as a guide. |
| **The Call**The hero may actually refuse the initial call to adventure, usually from their fear of change, insecurity or a sense of inadequacy. The hero will eventually go on his journey, either from “encouragement” by a supernatural force or by an event that almost forces the hero to move beyond his home. |
| **Supernatural Aid** **– Magnified Powers**Once the hero has committed to the journey, consciously or unconsciously, his or her guide and supernatural helper appears, or becomes known (he/she may meet an old man, a god/goddess or a messenger who may give the hero a weapon or some magical powers). |
| **The Crossing of the First Threshold**This "threshold" the hero must cross is what separates the hero from the comforts of his home to the adventurous new world filled with mystery and danger. Sometimes the threshold is guarded by a gatekeeper whom the hero must defeat. |
| **A Place Apart – Road of Trials****A Place of Extended Opportunities** |
| In the new world, the hero must confront a series of challenges and tests to help the hero improve his character and skills to become more self-reliant. Through these trials the hero begins a transformation. This is a place for interacting with new opportunities.  |
| **The Vision Quest****Withdrawal from family or community for meditation and preparation** |
| **The Meeting with the Goddess** **– Marriage**During the Road of Trials, the hero may encounter the goddess of the new world, who could be viewed as a beautiful, motherly figure or as a queen. The goddess can bring complete fullness to the hero's character, helping him realize what awards await him when he finishes his quest. This character is not always a woman.This may also be an understanding of unconditional love, a sacred marriage or the union of opposites and may take place entirely within the person. The person may begin to see him or herself in a non-dualistic way (self-unification). This very important step is often represented by the person finding the other person that he or she loves most completely.  |
| **Temptation from the True Path** The hero will be met with temptations that may lead the hero to abandon or stray from his or her quest. The hero must overcome his selfish desires in order to return to the rightful path and also build his or her character. This step is about the revulsion that hero may feel about his own fleshy/earthy nature that detracts him/her from his/her spiritual journey.  |
| **Coming to Terms with Authority**Eventually in his journey, the hero may encounter a figure with much authority (often a fatherly figure). The figure (like the goddess) can be portrayed as a man who feels threatened by the hero or as a man who helps the hero in his journey. Either way, the hero must reconcile with the authority figure to understand him and himself. For the transformation to take place, the person as he or she has been must be “killed” so that the new self can come into being. Sometime this killing is literal, and the earthly journey for that character is either over or moves into a different realm. This is the center point of the journey. All the previous steps have been moving in to this place, all that follow will move out from it.  |
| **High Point (Resurrection and Rebirth)**A hero’s high point (apotheosis) is achieved when he comes to a realization about the purpose of life and himself. With an expanded consciousness, he views the world in an entirely different way than when he first started his journey. When someone dies a physical death, or dies to the physical self (the natural man) to live in spirit, he or she moves beyond the pairs of opposites to a state of divine knowledge, love, compassion and bliss. Usually, the hero at this point becomes a selfless person who always cares for others before himself. |
| **The Boon – The Gift Received – The Blessing**The ultimate boon is the achievement of the goal of the quest. It is what the person went on the journey to get. All the previous steps serve to prepare and purify the person for this step, since in many myths the boon is something transcendent like the elixir of life itself, or a plant that supplies immortality, or the holy grail. With the new knowledge, the hero acquired in his high point, he now wishes to share it with the rest of mankind. Usually, the knowledge the hero obtains is related to immortality, where an indestructible live continues after the death of the body. |
|  **Return****Creating A Home Renewed** |
| **Refusal of the Return**Once the hero finishes his quest, he may not want to return to his or her home, but rather stay in the new world. The hero may believe that the old world won’t accept or understand what the hero has learned on his journey. |
| **The Flight**The hero may decide to return home after finishing his quest. He may be accompanied by a protector who helps him overcome the obstacles the hero might face as he returns home. With the prize in hand, the hero must flee from those he angered on his journey. |
| **Rescue from Without**Just as the hero may need guides and assistants to set out on the quest, often times he must have powerful guides and rescuers to bring him back to everyday life, especially if he has been wounded or weakened by the experience. Or perhaps, he doesn’t realize that it is time to return, that he can return, or that others need his boon. |
| **The Crossing of the Return Threshold**As the hero travels to return home on his journey, he must once again cross the threshold separating his home and the new world. The trick in returning is to retain the wisdom gained on the quest, to integrate that wisdom into a human life, and then maybe figure out how to share the wisdom with the rest of the world. This is usually extremely difficult and the hero may have to defeat another gatekeeper. |
| **Master of the Two Worlds**This step is usually represented by a transcendental hero like Jesus or Buddha. For a human hero, it may mean achieving a balance between the material and spiritual. Once the hero crosses the return threshold, he or she comes to realize that there really is nothing separating his or her home from the new world. The hero now understands the differences and the balance between the comfortable safety of his home and the new world. With this understanding, the hero has also balanced his or her character and mind. |
| **Freedom to Live**Mastery leads to freedom from the fear of death, which in turn is the freedom to live. This is being. This is sometimes referred to as living in the moment, neither anticipating the future nor regretting the past. With his newfound knowledge, he can now be beneficial to the world. |

This list shows examples of Monomyths, as described by Joseph Campbell.

 This list is incomplete; you can help by expanding it.

Adam and Eve

Aeneas

Alice in Wonderland

Al‑Khidr

Alex Rider

The American Monomyth

American Gods

Avatar:The Last Airbender

Avatar (2009 film)

King Arthur

Beowulf

Berzerker Man

Gautama Buddha

Cold Mountain (novel)

Cú Chulainn

The Dawn‑Breakers

The Dark Tower (series).[1]

Deluge myth

Dionysus

Djanggawul

Elijah

Ender's Game

Enoch (son of Cain)

Farmer Weathersky

Foundling‑Bird

Gilgamesh

Glee

Glooscap

Gurren Lagann

Harry Potter

Hainuwele

Heracles

The Hobbit

I Am Legend

InuYasha

Jason

Jesus Christ in comparative mythology

Joseph (Hebrew Bible)

Krishna

The Last Samurai

The Lion King

The Lord of the Rings

Lozi mythology

The Master Maid

The Matrix (franchise)

Monsters Inc

Muhammad

Mythopoeia (genre)

The Neverending Story

Odin

Odysseus

Odyssey

Osiris

Percy Jackson

Popol Vuh

Poseidon

Prometheus

Quetzalcoatl

Ramayana

Rocky

Siddhartha (novel)

Sigurd

The Runelords

The Song of Roland

The Space Trilogy

Spider‑Man

Star Wars

Sundiata Keita

Superman

Theseus

Wall‑E

The Water Nixie

Watership Down

X (manga)

Xenogears

Yamato Takeru

Zoroaster

Notes

 [1], Stephen King´s "The Dark Tower": a modern myth University essay from Luleå tekniska universitet/Språk och kultur Author: Henrik Fåhraeus; [2008] .

**Monomyth**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

For other uses, see The Hero's Journey (disambiguation).

Joseph Campbell's term monomyth, also referred to as the hero's journey, is a basic pattern that its proponents argue is found in many narratives from around the world. This widely distributed pattern was described by Campbell in The Hero with a Thousand Faces (1949).[1] An enthusiast of novelist James Joyce, Campbell borrowed the term monomyth from Joyce's Finnegans Wake.[2]

Campbell held that numerous myths from disparate times and regions share fundamental structures and stages, which he summarized in The Hero with a Thousand Faces:

“ A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.[3] ”

Campbell and other scholars, such as Erich Neumann, describe narratives of Buddha, Moses, and Christ in terms of the monomyth and Campbell argues that classic myths from many cultures follow this basic pattern.[4]

This chart outlines the monomyth.

A chart outlining the Hero's Journey.

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Summary

Main article: The Hero with a Thousand Faces

In a monomyth, the hero begins in the ordinary world, and receives a call to enter an unknown world of strange powers and events. The hero who accepts the call to enter this strange world must face tasks and trials, either alone or with assistance. In the most intense versions of the narrative, the hero must survive a severe challenge, often with help. If the hero survives, the hero may achieve a great gift or "boon." The hero must then decide whether to return to the ordinary world with this boon. If the hero does decide to return, he or she often faces challenges on the return journey. If the hero returns successfully, the boon or gift may be used to improve the world. The stories of Osiris, Prometheus, Moses, Buddha, for example, follow this structure closely.[1]

Campbell describes some 17 stages or steps along this journey. Very few myths contain all 17 stages—some myths contain many of the stages, while others contain only a few; some myths may focus on only one of the stages, while other myths may deal with the stages in a somewhat different order. These 17 stages may be organized in a number of ways, including division into three sections: Departure (sometimes called Separation), Initiation, and Return. "Departure" deals with the hero's adventure prior to the quest; "Initiation" deals with the hero's many adventures along the way; and "Return" deals with the hero's return home with knowledge and powers acquired on the journey.

The 17 Stages of the Monomyth

**Departure**

**The Call to Adventure**

The hero starts off in a mundane situation of normality from which some information is received that acts as a call to head off into the unknown.

Campbell: "This first stage of the mythological journey—which we have designated the 'call to adventure'—signifies that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown. This fateful region of both treasure and danger may be variously represented: as a distant land, a forest, a kingdom underground, beneath the waves, or above the sky, a secret island, lofty mountaintop, or profound dream state; but it is always a place of strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments, superhuman deeds, and impossible delight. The hero can go forth of his own volition to accomplish the adventure, as did Theseus when he arrived in his father's city, Athens, and heard the horrible history of the Minotaur; or he may be carried or sent abroad by some benign or malignant agent as was Odysseus, driven about the Mediterranean by the winds of the angered god, Poseidon. The adventure may begin as a mere blunder ... or still again, one may be only casually strolling when some passing phenomenon catches the wandering eye and lures one away from the frequented paths of man. Examples might be multiplied, ad infinitum, from every corner of the world."

Classic examples: Sometimes the call to adventure happens of the character's own volition. In Herman Hesse's Siddhartha, the titular character becomes weary of his way of life and decides he must venture away from his accustomed life in order to attain spiritual enlightenment. In narratives describing the Buddha's journey, he leaves his ordinary life in pursuit of spiritual awakening after observing three men: an old man, a sick man, and a dead man, and raising the question as to why misery exists in the human world. Other times, the hero is plunged into adventure by unforeseen events. In Homer's Odyssey, Odysseus is caught in the terrible winds of the angered god Poseidon and sent off to distant lands.[5]

**Refusal of the Call**

Often when the call is given, the future hero refuses to heed it. This may be from a sense of duty or obligation, fear, insecurity, a sense of inadequacy, or any of a range of reasons that work to hold the person in his or her current circumstances.

Campbell: "Refusal of the summons converts the adventure into its negative. Walled in boredom, hard work, or 'culture,' the subject loses the power of significant affirmative action and becomes a victim to be saved. His flowering world becomes a wasteland of dry stones and his life feels meaningless—even though, like King Minos, he may through titanic effort succeed in building an empire or renown. Whatever house he builds, it will be a house of death: a labyrinth of cyclopean walls to hide from him his minotaur. All he can do is create new problems for himself and await the gradual approach of his disintegration." [3]

Classic examples: Mythology is rife with examples of what happens to those who refuse the call too long or do not take it seriously. In Judeo‑Christian belief, Lot's wife is turned into a pillar of salt for looking back with longing to her old life when she had been summoned forth from her city by Yahweh and is thus prevented from being the "hero". One of the clearest references to the refusal and its consequences comes in the voice of the personified Wisdom in Proverbs 1:24‑27 and 32:

 Because I have called, and ye refused ... I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. ... For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

**Supernatural Aid**

Once the hero has committed to the quest, consciously or unconsciously, his or her guide and magical helper appears, or becomes known. More often than not, this supernatural mentor will present the hero with one or more talismans or artifacts that will aid them later in their quest.

Campbell: "For those who have not refused the call, the first encounter of the herojourney is with a protective figure (often a little old crone or old man) who provides the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass. What such a figure represents is the benign, protecting power of destiny. The fantasy is a reassurance—promise that the peace of Paradise, which was known first within the mother womb, is not to be lost; that it supports the present and stands in the future as well as in the past (is omega as well as alpha); that though omnipotence may seem to be endangered by the threshold passages and life awakenings, protective power is always and ever present within or just behind the unfamiliar features of the world. One has only to know and trust, and the ageless guardians will appear. Having responded to his own call, and continuing to follow courageously as the consequences unfold, the hero finds all the forces of the unconscious at his side. Mother Nature herself supports the mighty task. And in so far as the hero's act coincides with that for which his society is ready, he seems to ride on the great rhythm of the historical process." [4]

Classic example: In Greek mythology, Ariadne gives Theseus a ball of string and a sword before he enters the labyrinth to confront the Minotaur.

**The Crossing of the First Threshold**

This is the point where the person actually crosses into the field of adventure, leaving the known limits of his or her world and venturing into an unknown and dangerous realm where the rules and limits are not known.

Campbell: "With the personifications of his destiny to guide and aid him, the hero goes forward in his adventure until he comes to the 'threshold guardian' at the entrance to the zone of magnified power. Such custodians bound the world in four directions—also up and down—standing for the limits of the hero's present sphere, or life horizon. Beyond them is darkness, the unknown and danger; just as beyond the parental watch is danger to the infant and beyond the protection of his society danger to the members of the tribe. The usual person is more than content, he is even proud, to remain within the indicated bounds, and popular belief gives him every reason to fear so much as the first step into the unexplored. The adventure is always and everywhere a passage beyond the veil of the known into the unknown; the powers that watch at the boundary are dangerous; to deal with them is risky; yet for anyone with competence and courage the danger fades." [5]

**Belly of The Whale**

The belly of the whale represents the final separation from the hero's known world and self. By entering this stage, the person shows willingness to undergo a metamorphosis.

Campbell: "The idea that the passage of the magical threshold is a transit into a sphere of rebirth is symbolized in the worldwide womb image of the belly of the whale. The hero, instead of conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, is swallowed into the unknown and would appear to have died. This popular motif gives emphasis to the lesson that the passage of the threshold is a form of self‑annihilation. Instead of passing outward, beyond the confines of the visible world, the hero goes inward, to be born again. The disappearance corresponds to the passing of a worshipper into a temple—where he is to be quickened by the recollection of who and what he is, namely dust and ashes unless immortal. The temple interior, the belly of the whale, and the heavenly land beyond, above, and below the confines of the world, are one and the same. That is why the approaches and entrances to temples are flanked and defended by colossal gargoyles: dragons, lions, devil‑slayers with drawn swords, resentful dwarfs, winged bulls. The devotee at the moment of entry into a temple undergoes a metamorphosis. Once inside he may be said to have died to time and returned to the World Womb, the World Navel, the Earthly Paradise. Allegorically, then, the passage into a temple and the hero‑dive through the jaws of the whale are identical adventures, both denoting in picture language, the life‑centering, life‑renewing act." [6]

Classical example: In the story of Dionysus, Hera sends hungry titans to devour the infant Dionysus. The Titans tear apart the child and consume his flesh. However Dionysus's heart is saved by Hestia, goddess of the hearth, allowing Dionysus to be reborn as a god.

**Initiation**

**The Road of Trials**

The road of trials is a series of tests, tasks, or ordeals that the person must undergo to begin the transformation. Often the person fails one or more of these tests, which often occur in threes.

Campbell: "Once having traversed the threshold, the hero moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials. This is a favorite phase of the myth‑adventure. It has produced a world literature of miraculous tests and ordeals. The hero is covertly aided by the advice, amulets, and secret agents of the supernatural helper whom he met before his entrance into this region. Or it may be that he here discovers for the first time that there is a benign power everywhere supporting him in his superhuman passage. The original departure into the land of trials represented only the beginning of the long and really perilous path of initiatory conquests and moments of illumination. Dragons have now to be slain and surprising barriers passed—again, again, and again. Meanwhile there will be a multitude of preliminary victories, unretainable ecstasies and momentary glimpses of the wonderful land." [7]

**The Meeting With the Goddess**

This is the point when the person experiences a love that has the power and significance of the all‑powerful, all encompassing, unconditional love that a fortunate infant may experience with his or her mother. This is a very important step in the process and is often represented by the person finding the other person that he or she loves most completely.

Campbell: "The ultimate adventure, when all the barriers and ogres have been overcome, is commonly represented as a mystical marriage of the triumphant hero‑soul with the Queen Goddess of the World. This is the crisis at the nadir, the zenith, or at the uttermost edge of the earth, at the central point of the cosmos, in the tabernacle of the temple, or within the darkness of the deepest chamber of the heart. The meeting with the goddess (who is incarnate in every woman) is the final test of the talent of the hero to win the boon of love (charity: amor fati), which is life itself enjoyed as the encasement of eternity. And when the adventurer, in this context, is not a youth but a maid, she is the one who, by her qualities, her beauty, or her yearning, is fit to become the consort of an immortal. Then the heavenly husband descends to her and conducts her to his bed—whether she will or not. And if she has shunned him, the scales fall from her eyes; if she has sought him, her desire finds its peace." [8]

**Woman as Temptress**

This step is about those temptations that may lead the hero to abandon or stray from his or her quest, which does not necessarily have to be represented by a woman. Woman is a metaphor for the physical or material temptations of life, since the hero‑knight was often tempted by lust from his spiritual journey.

Campbell: "The crux of the curious difficulty lies in the fact that our conscious views of what life ought to be seldom correspond to what life really is. Generally we refuse to admit within ourselves, or within our friends, the fullness of that pushing, self‑protective, malodorous, carnivorous, lecherous fever which is the very nature of the organic cell. Rather, we tend to perfume, whitewash, and reinterpret; meanwhile imagining that all the flies in the ointment, all the hairs in the soup, are the faults of some unpleasant someone else. But when it suddenly dawns on us, or is forced to our attention that everything we think or do is necessarily tainted with the odor of the flesh, then, not uncommonly, there is experienced a moment of revulsion: life, the acts of life, the organs of life, woman in particular as the great symbol of life, become intolerable to the pure, the pure, pure soul. The seeker of the life beyond life must press beyond (the woman), surpass the temptations of her call, and soar to the immaculate ether beyond." [9]

**Atonement with the Father**

In this step the person must confront and be initiated by whatever holds the ultimate power in his or her life. In many myths and stories this is the father, or a father figure who has life and death power. This is the center point of the journey. All the previous steps have been moving in to this place, all that follow will move out from it. Although this step is most frequently symbolized by an encounter with a male entity, it does not have to be a male; just someone or thing with incredible power.

Campbell: "Atonement consists in no more than the abandonment of that self‑generated double monster—the dragon thought to be God (superego) and the dragon thought to be Sin (repressed id). But this requires an abandonment of the attachment to ego itself, and that is what is difficult. One must have a faith that the father is merciful, and then a reliance on that mercy. Therewith, the center of belief is transferred outside of the bedeviling god's tight scaly ring, and the dreadful ogres dissolve. It is in this ordeal that the hero may derive hope and assurance from the helpful female figure, by whose magic (pollen charms or power of intercession) he is protected through all the frightening experiences of the father's ego‑shattering initiation. For if it is impossible to trust the terrifying father‑face, then one's faith must be centered elsewhere (Spider Woman, Blessed Mother); and with that reliance for support, one endures the crisis—only to find, in the end, that the father and mother reflect each other, and are in essence the same. The problem of the hero going to meet the father is to open his soul beyond terror to such a degree that he will be ripe to understand how the sickening and insane tragedies of this vast and ruthless cosmos are completely validated in the majesty of Being. The hero transcends life with its peculiar blind spot and for a moment rises to a glimpse of the source. He beholds the face of the father, understands—and the two are atoned." [10]

**Apotheosis**

When someone dies a physical death, or dies to the self to live in spirit, he or she moves beyond the pairs of opposites to a state of divine knowledge, love, compassion and bliss. A more mundane way of looking at this step is that it is a period of rest, peace and fulfillment before the hero begins the return.

Campbell: "Those who know, not only that the Everlasting lies in them, but that what they, and all things, really are is the Everlasting, dwell in the groves of the wish fulfilling trees, drink the brew of immortality, and listen everywhere to the unheard music of eternal concord." [11]

**The Ultimate Boon**

The ultimate boon is the achievement of the goal of the quest. It is what the person went on the journey to get. All the previous steps serve to prepare and purify the person for this step, since in many myths the boon is something transcendent like the elixir of life itself, or a plant that supplies immortality, or the holy grail.

Campbell: "The gods and goddesses then are to be understood as embodiments and custodians of the elixir of Imperishable Being but not themselves the Ultimate in its primary state. What the hero seeks through his intercourse with them is therefore not finally themselves, but their grace, i.e., the power of their sustaining substance. This miraculous energy‑substance and this alone is the Imperishable; the names and forms of the deities who everywhere embody, dispense, and represent it come and go. This is the miraculous energy of the thunderbolts of Zeus, Yahweh, and the Supreme Buddha, the fertility of the rain of Viracocha, the virtue announced by the bell rung in the Mass at the consecration, and the light of the ultimate illumination of the saint and sage. Its guardians dare release it only to the duly proven." [12]

**Return**

**Refusal of the Return**

Having found bliss and enlightenment in the other world, the hero may not want to return to the ordinary world to bestow the boon onto his fellow man.

Campbell: "When the hero‑quest has been accomplished, through penetration to the source, or through the grace of some male or female, human or animal, personification, the adventurer still must return with his life‑transmuting trophy. The full round, the norm of the monomyth, requires that the hero shall now begin the labor of bringing the runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece, or his sleeping princess, back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may redound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet or the ten thousand worlds. But the responsibility has been frequently refused. Even the Buddha, after his triumph, doubted whether the message of realization could be communicated, and saints are reported to have died while in the supernal ecstasy. Numerous indeed are the heroes fabled to have taken up residence forever in the blessed isle of the unaging Goddess of Immortal Being." [13]

**The Magic Flight**

Sometimes the hero must escape with the boon, if it is something that the gods have been jealously guarding. It can be just as adventurous and dangerous returning from the journey as it was to go on it.

Campbell: "If the hero in his triumph wins the blessing of the goddess or the god and is then explicitly commissioned to return to the world with some elixir for the restoration of society, the final stage of his adventure is supported by all the powers of his supernatural patron. On the other hand, if the trophy has been attained against the opposition of its guardian, or if the hero's wish to return to the world has been resented by the gods or demons, then the last stage of the mythological round becomes a lively, often comical, pursuit. This flight may be complicated by marvels of magical obstruction and evasion." [14]

Classic examples: In many fairy tales and folktales, it is literally a magic flight, with the hero or heroine transforming objects to stop the pursuit (The Master Maid, The Water Nixie) or transforming himself and any companions to hide themselves (Farmer Weathersky or Foundling‑Bird).

**Rescue from Without**

Just as the hero may need guides and assistants to set out on the quest, oftentimes he or she must have powerful guides and rescuers to bring them back to everyday life, especially if the person has been wounded or weakened by the experience.

Campbell: "The hero may have to be brought back from his supernatural adventure by assistance from without. That is to say, the world may have to come and get him. For the bliss of the deep abode is not lightly abandoned in favor of the self‑scattering of the wakened state. 'Who having cast off the world,' we read, 'would desire to return again? He would be only there.' And yet, in so far as one is alive, life will call. Society is jealous of those who remain away from it, and will come knocking at the door. If the hero. . . is unwilling, the disturber suffers an ugly shock; but on the other hand, if the summoned one is only delayed—sealed in by the beatitude of the state of perfect being (which resembles death)—an apparent rescue is effected, and the adventurer returns." [15]

**The Crossing of the Return Threshold**

The trick in returning is to retain the wisdom gained on the quest, to integrate that wisdom into a human life, and then maybe figure out how to share the wisdom with the rest of the world. This is usually extremely difficult.

Campbell: "The returning hero, to complete his adventure, must survive the impact of the world. Many failures attest to the difficulties of this life‑affirmative threshold. The first problem of the returning hero is to accept as real, after an experience of the soul‑satisfying vision of fulfillment, the passing joys and sorrows, banalities and noisy obscenities of life. Why re‑enter such a world? Why attempt to make plausible, or even interesting, to men and women consumed with passion, the experience of transcendental bliss? As dreams that were momentous by night may seem simply silly in the light of day, so the poet and the prophet can discover themselves playing the idiot before a jury of sober eyes. The easy thing is to commit the whole community to the devil and retire again into the heavenly rock dwelling, close the door, and make it fast. But if some spiritual obstetrician has drawn the shimenawa across the retreat, then the work of representing eternity in time, and perceiving in time eternity, cannot be avoided" The hero returns to the world of common day and must accept it as real.[16]

**Master of Two Worlds**

This step is usually represented by a transcendental hero like Jesus or Buddha. For a human hero, it may mean achieving a balance between the material and spiritual. The person has become comfortable and competent in both the inner and outer worlds.

Campbell: "Freedom to pass back and forth across the world division, from the perspective of the apparitions of time to that of the causal deep and back—not contaminating the principles of the one with those of the other, yet permitting the mind to know the one by virtue of the other—is the talent of the master. The Cosmic Dancer, declares Nietzsche, does not rest heavily in a single spot, but gaily, lightly, turns and leaps from one position to another. It is possible to speak from only one point at a time, but that does not invalidate the insights of the rest. The individual, through prolonged psychological disciplines, gives up completely all attachment to his personal limitations, idiosyncrasies, hopes and fears, no longer resists the self‑annihilation that is prerequisite to rebirth in the realization of truth, and so becomes ripe, at last, for the great at‑one‑ment. His personal ambitions being totally dissolved, he no longer tries to live but willingly relaxes to whatever may come to pass in him; he becomes, that is to say, an anonymity."[17]

Biblical application: In the Christ story, Jesus is able to return to the ordinary world after resurrection.

**Freedom to Live**

Mastery leads to freedom from the fear of death, which in turn is the freedom to live. This is sometimes referred to as living in the moment, neither anticipating the future nor regretting the past.

Campbell: "The hero is the champion of things becoming, not of things become, because he is. 'Before Abraham was, I AM.' He does not mistake apparent changelessness in time for the permanence of Being, nor is he fearful of the next moment (or of the 'other thing'), as destroying the permanent with its change. 'Nothing retains its own form; but Nature, the greater renewer, ever makes up forms from forms. Be sure there's nothing perishes in the whole universe; it does but vary and renew its form.' Thus the next moment is permitted to come to pass." [18]

Biblical application: Christ returns to the ordinary world after his resurrection, but not as an ordinary man. He can seem to be as others are and interact with them, but his body is a "glorified" body, capable of assuming visible and palpable form, but freed from the bonds of space and time. He is now able to give life to others through his own death and resurrection. Other traditional examples of something similar are Elijah, Enoch, and Khidr, the "immortal prophet" of the Sufis.

Other formulations

Campbell's proposed structure has been expanded and modified since its conception. Many modern characterizations of it add in new steps (such as the hero having a miraculous birth) or combine or prune others. For instance, Phil Cousineau, in his book, The Hero's Journey, divides it up into the following eight steps:

 The Call to Adventure

 The Road of Trials

 The Vision Quest

 The Meeting with the Goddess

 The Boon

 The Magic Flight

 The Return Threshold

 The Master of Two Worlds[6]

Another eight‑step formulation was given by David Adams Leeming in his book, Mythology: The Voyage of the Hero:

 Miraculous conception and birth

 Initiation of the hero‑child

 Withdrawal from family or community for meditation and preparation

 Trial and Quest

 Death

 Descent into the underworld

 Resurrection and rebirth

 Ascension, apotheosis, and atonement[7]

The Hero's Journey

The phrase "the hero's journey," to describe the monomyth, first entered into popular discourse through two documentaries. The first, released in 1987, The Hero's Journey: The World of Joseph Campbell, was accompanied by a 1990 companion book, The Hero's Journey: Joseph Campbell on His Life and Work (with Phil Cousineau and Stuart Brown, eds.). The second was Bill Moyers's series of seminal interviews with Campbell, released in 1988 as the documentary (and companion book) The Power of Myth. The phrase was then referenced in the title of a popular guidebook for screenwriters, released in the 1990s, The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure For Writers, by Christopher Vogler [19]. Though they used the phrase in their works, Cousineau, Moyers, and Vogler all attribute the phrase and the model of The Hero's Journey to Joseph Campbell.

Influence of the Monomyth

The monomyth has influenced a number of artists, musicians, poets, and filmmakers, including Bob Dylan and George Lucas. Mickey Hart, Bob Weir and Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead had long noted Campbell's influence and agreed to participate in a seminar with him in 1986 entitled From Ritual to Rapture.[8]

Campbell's work has been consciously applied by a wide variety of modern writers and artists, for example, in creating screenplays for movies. The best known is perhaps George Lucas, who has acknowledged a debt to Campbell regarding both the original Star Wars trilogy and its prequels.

J.R.R. Tolkien's novel The Lord of the Rings can be seen as another contemporary example of the monomyth.[9]

George Lucas and Star Wars

George Lucas's deliberate use of Campbell's theory of the monomyth in the making of the Star Wars movies is well documented. In addition to the extensive discussion between Campbell and Bill Moyers broadcast in 1988 on PBS as The Power of Myth (Filmed at "Skywalker Ranch"), on Campbell's influence on the Star Wars films, Lucas, himself, gave an extensive interview for the biography Joseph Campbell: A Fire in the Mind (Larsen and Larsen, 2002, pages 541‑543) on this topic. In this interview, Lucas states that in the early 1970s after completing his early film, American Graffiti, "it came to me that there really was no modern use of mythology...so that's when I started doing more strenuous research on fairy tales, folklore and mythology, and I started reading Joe's books. Before that I hadn't read any of Joe's books.... It was very eerie because in reading The Hero with A Thousand Faces I began to realize that my first draft of Star Wars was following classical motifs"(p. 541).

Twelve years after the making of The Power of Myth, Moyers and Lucas met again for the 1999 interview, the Mythology of Star Wars with George Lucas & Bill Moyers, to further discuss the impact of Campbell's work on Lucas's films.[10] In addition, the National Air and Space Museum of the Smithsonian Institution sponsored an exhibit during the late 1990s called Star Wars: The Magic of Myth which discussed the ways in which Campbell's work shaped the Star Wars films [11] A companion guide of the same name was published in 1997.

Chris Vogler, The Writer's Journey, and Hollywood films

Christopher Vogler, a Hollywood film producer and writer, created a now‑famous 7‑page company memo, A Practical Guide to The Hero With a Thousand Faces[12], based on Campbell's work which inspired films such as Disney's 1994 film, The Lion King/[citation needed] Vogler's memo was later developed into the late 1990s book, The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure For Writers. This story structure is evident in a vast number of successful Hollywood films including the Matrix series.[citation needed]

Orson Scott Card and Ender's Game

Michael Collings claims in an article that was initially published in "The Leading Edge: Magazine of Science Fiction and Fantasy Vol. 16" that in the book, Ender's Game, Orson Scott Card gives a very complete example of the monomyth structure, with the main character, Ender Wiggin, fulfilling all eight primary stages of it (using Leeming's formulation):

 Miraculous Birth — In a world where only two children are normally allowed, Ender is born as the third child by special government decree

 Initiation — Ender shows remarkable intelligence at a young age

 Withdrawal — Ender is removed from his family and sent to Battle School

 Trial and Quest — Ender learns of the threat to humanity from the Buggers

 Death — Ender grows despondent after his unit is broken up, and he is sent back to Earth

 Descent into the underworld — Ender's sister helps him feel like part of humanity once again

 Resurrection and rebirth — Ender refuses to play the simulations anymore, and ends the game by destroying the Buggers' homeworld

 Ascension, apotheosis, and atonement — Ender learns that the simulations were in fact real and has to cope with this.

He says that the narrative structure within Ender's Game doesn't follow this structure in a perfectly linear sense. Many elements of it are actually repeated throughout the book. In his opinion, the latter four steps can also describe the psychological states Ender went through after his realization of what he'd done to the Buggers.[13]

The men's movement

Poet Robert Bly, Michael J. Meade, and others involved in the men's movement have applied and expanded the concepts of the hero's journey and the monomyth as a metaphor for personal spiritual and psychological growth, particularly in the mythopoetic men's movement.[14][15]

Characteristic of the mythopoetic men's movement is a tendency to retell fairy tales and engage in their exegesis as a tool for personal insight. Using frequent references to archetypes as drawn from Jungian analytical psychology, the movement focuses on issues of gender role, gender identity and wellness for modern men.[15] Advocates would often engage in storytelling with music, these acts being seen as a modern extension to a form of "new age shamanism" popularized by Michael Harner at approximately the same time.

Among its most famous advocates were the poet Robert Bly, whose book Iron John: A Book About Men was a best‑seller, being an exegesis of the fairy tale "Iron John" by the Brothers Grimm.[14]

The mythopoetic men's movement spawned a variety of groups and workshops, led by authors such as Bly and Robert L. Moore.[15] Some serious academic work came out of this movement, including the creation of various magazines and non‑profit organizations, such as the Mankind Project.[14]

Criticism

Scholars have questioned the very validity of the monomyth, its usefulness as a tool for critical investigation and interpretation of narrative, and its male bias. According to Lesley Northup, the theory does not have much support in the mainstream study of mythology, which currently tends to view highly general and universal claims with suspicion.[16] Donald J. Consentino remarks, "It is just as important to stress differences as similarities, to avoid creating a (Joseph) Campbell soup of myths that loses all local flavor."[17] Marta Weigle rejects the idea of a "monomyth" in which women appear only exceptionally, and then as indistinguishable from men.[18] Others have found the categories Campbell works with so vague as to be meaningless, and lacking the support required of scholarly argument: Muriel Crespi, writing in response to Campbell's filmed presentation of his model[19] characterized it as "...unsatisfying from a social science perspective. Campbell's ethnocentrism will raise objections, and his analytic level is so abstract and devoid of ethnographic context that myth loses the very meanings supposed to be embedded in the "hero." In Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth (1984), editor Alan Dundes dismisses Campbell's work, characterizing him as a popularizer: "like most universalists, he is content to merely assert universality rather than bother to document it. […] If Campbell's generalizations about myth are not substantiated, why should students consider his work?"[20]

Thoughtless use of monomyth structure is often blamed for lack of originality and clichés in popular culture, especially big‑budget Hollywood films.[citation needed] In addition to the popularity of Campbell‑influenced guides such as The Writer's Journey, the influential book Screenplay by Syd Field also proposed an ideal three‑act structure, which is easily compatible with modern screenwriters' attempts to craft a monomyth.

The novelist David Brin has criticized the monomyth, arguing that it is anti‑populist, and was used by kings and priests to justify tyranny. Brin also pointed out that the existence of a monomyth may reflect cross‑cultural historical similarities, rather than some deeper "human insight". He points out that, until relatively recently, storytellers were dependent upon the oligarchy for their livelihood and that the aristocracy only recently lost its power to punish irreverence. Once those historical factors disappeared, science fiction emerged—a story‑telling mode Brin sees as the antithesis of Campbell's monomyth.[21]

In a similar vein, American philosopher John Shelton Lawrence and American religious scholar Robert Jewett have discussed an "American Monomyth" in many of their books, The American Monomyth, The Myth of the American Superhero, and Captain America and the Crusade Against Evil: The Dilemma of Zealous Nationalism. They present this as an American reaction to the Campbellian monomyth. The "American Monomyth" storyline is: A community in a harmonious paradise is threatened by evil; normal institutions fail to contend with this threat; a selfless superhero emerges to renounce temptations and carry out the redemptive task; aided by fate, his decisive victory restores the community to its paradisiacal condition; the superhero then recedes into obscurity. [22]

See also

 Comparative mythology

 Hero

 List of monomyths

 Lord Raglan

 Otto Rank

 Spiritual warrior

 Vladimir Propp

Notes

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 ^ Jody G. Bower: The Lord of the Rings" — An Archetypal Hero’s Journey

 ^ [1]

 ^ [2]

 ^ The Writer's Journey accessed 2011‑03‑26

 ^ Ender's Game and the Hero's Quest by Michael R. Collings, published in "In the Image of God: Theme, Characterization, and Landscape in the Fiction of Orson Scott Card." by Michael R. Collings, Westport CT: Greenwood, 1990. ISBN 978‑0‑313‑26404‑7, revised by Collings for his website.

 ^ a b c Boston Globe accessed 2009‑11‑03

 ^ a b c Use by Bly of Campbell's monomyth work accessed 2009‑11‑03

 ^ Northup, p. 8

 ^ "African Oral Narrative Traditions" in Foley, John Miles, ed., "Teaching Oral Traditions." NY: Modern Language Association, 1998, p. 183

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 Joseph Campbell and the power of myth (1988)

 The Hero's Journey: The World of Joseph Campbell (1987)

External links

 Monomyth Website, ORIAS, UC Berkeley

 The Monomyth Cycle

 Examples of Each Stage of a Heros Journey in Star Wars and The Matrix

 Hero's Journey