

The Hero's Journey

The Great Adventure

In mythology, heroes take great journeys: to slay Medusa, to kill the minotaur, to find the golden fleece, to rescue the sun. But *The Hero's Journey* (or *Quest*) isn't just a pattern from myth. It's the pattern of life, growth and experience—for all of us. We see it reflected everywhere, from a simple television comedy to the great works of classical literature.

Parallels the Rite of Passage

The Journey has the same three stages as the *Rite of Passage*. First the initiate faces *separation* from his own, familiar world. Once separated, he undergoes *initiation and transformation*, where the old ways of thinking and acting are altered or destroyed, opening the way to a new level of awareness, skill and freedom. After successfully meeting the challenges of the initiation, the initiate takes the journey's final step, the *return* to his world. When he does, he will find that he is a more confident, perceptive, and capable person.

A map to experience

Why study *The Hero's Journey*? Why learn a pattern that dates back to before recorded history? The answer is simple: we should study it because it's the pattern of human experience, of our experience, and we will live it for the rest of our lives.

In a sense, every challenge or change we face in life is a Journey: every "falling in" or "falling out," every birth or death, every move to a new town or school—every situation which confronts us with something new. Some journeys are longer and more difficult than others, but they are all journeys we must face throughout life.

As with any process of change, journeys can be confusing and painful, but every challenge brings opportunities for discovery and growth. The struggle helps us develop confidence, perspective and

understanding. It is a process of self-discovery and self-integration, of maintaining balance and harmony in our lives.

Understanding the Journey pattern can help you understand the literature you read, the movies you see, and the experiences which shape your life. By recognizing the Journey's stages and how they function, you will develop a sense of the flow of your own experience and be better able to make decisions and solve problems. More importantly, you will begin to recognize your own points of passage and respect the significance they have for you.

Eight-step transformation

We usually divide the Journey into eight steps, but you must remember that *the journey is an individual process of growth and transformation*. The sequence

and duration of the experiences will vary from one person to another. Here are the basic elements in *The Hero's Journey*:

Separation (from the known)

- The Call
- The Threshold (with guardians, helpers, and mentor)

Initiation and Transformation

- The Challenges
- The Abyss
- The Transformation
- The Revelation
- The Atonement

The Return (to the known world)

- The Return (with a Gift)

It's important to remember that the journey is a process of separation, transformation, *and* return. It is a process where each stage must be completed successfully if the initiate is to become a hero. To turn back would mean that the initiate is rejecting her own need to grow. Unless the initiate sets out again, he may be locking himself into unending adolescence and giving up the benefits, freedom and fulfillment of adulthood.

The Hero's Journey: What makes a hero?

1. List the qualities that you feel a person should have in order to be considered heroic.

1.

2.

3.

2. Who do you know that is in some way a hero? Explain why that person is heroic.

3. List the names of five public figures living now who you feel are heroes.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

4. Pick one person from your list (number 3) and explain why you feel that person is heroic.

5. Describe a time when you did something that might be considered heroic.

6. What qualities do you have that might be considered heroic?

1.

2.

3.