

Understanding the Heroic Story in Light of Archetypes and the Monomyth

1) ARCHETYPE - From the Greek word “arkhetupos” meaning exemplary or ideal; an original model or template after which other things are patterned

- **IN PSYCHOLOGY:** Psychologist Carl Jung’s idea of *universal archetypes* relates to the recurring pattern of beliefs, situations, characters, stories and/or symbols existing around the world in the collective unconscious of humanity

- **IN MYTHOLOGY/RELIGION:** Mythologist Joseph Campbell took Jung’s idea of the archetype and applied it to mythologies from around the world, calling it the “monomyth” or “the hero’s journey.” The monomyth is a description of a basic, universal pattern of characters, events and symbols found in many/most myths, stories, and religious narratives from around the world.

- **IN LITERATURE/STORY TELLING:** Archetypes are images/symbols, story-patterns and/or character types which occur/reappear frequently in literary narratives and create strong, often unconscious associations and/or connections in the reader

2) EPIC - A long narrative poem that relates the great deeds of a larger-than-life hero who embodies the values of a particular society.

- **EPIC HERO:** larger-than-life character doing mighty deeds. They usually undertake a dangerous journey or quest to

- A “Perfect Type” of something upon which others are based AND/OR from which others are copied

Common Archetypes:

- The Child
- The Hero
- Great Mother
- Wise old man/woman
- The Damsel
- The Trickster
- The Betrayer
- The Destroyer
- The Rogue
- The Scoundrel

Extends to Cultural Traditions/Beliefs

- gods
- angels/demons
- appeasement/sacrifice/atonement

People/Characters:

- Prometheus (Grk)
- Osiris (Egypt)
- Noah & Moses (Israel)
- Buddha
- Mohammed
- Jesus
- Judas

Events:

- The “Fall”
- The Flood
- The Garden of Eden
- The Betrayal

Supernatural/Deities:

- God
- Satan
- Angels
- Demons
- Spirits/Ghosts

People/Characters:

- HERO (Beowulf, King Arthur, Harry Potter)
- ANTIHERO (Sam Spade, Odysseus, Batman, Spawn, The Lone Ranger, etc)
- COUNSELOR/SUPERNATURAL AIDE (Gandalf, Dumbledore, Mr. Miaggi (Karate Kid),
- SHAPE SHIFTER (Prof. Snape, Ash)

- Homer’s Illiad & Odyssey; Epic of Gilgamesh
- Stories of “epic proportion” – Lord of the Rings; Stephen King’s “The Stand;”

EPIC HERO – Odysseus, Superman, Indiana Jones, Beowulf, King Arthur,

supernatural realms to achieve a goal. They are often endowed with superior strength, knowledge, and courage. They may also carry within them some additional special "endowment"/power or some form of a supernatural blessing.

However, epic heroes also possess human weakness and flaws.

3) MYTH - A traditional story that explains a belief, custom, or mysterious natural phenomenon. Most myths are connected to/grow out of religious rituals and traditions, and almost all of them involve the exploits of gods and heroes.

4) MONOMYTH - The monomyth/ hero's journey is a name given to the basic pattern found in many narratives around the world. This universal pattern is described by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

In the monomyth, the hero starts in the ordinary world, and receives a call to enter an unusual world of strange powers and events. If the hero accepts the call to enter this strange world, the hero must face tasks and trials. At its most intense, the hero must survive a severe challenge, often with help earned along the journey. 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, the hero often faces challenges on the return journey. If the hero is successful in returning, the boon or gift may be used to improve the world.

The three stages of the Hero's Journey are: **Departure** (sometimes called Separation) in which the hero ventures forth on a quest; **Initiation** deals with the hero's various adventures and trials along the way; and **Return** which deals with the hero's return home with knowledge and/or power that he/she acquired on the journey.

- Lightening as a weapon used by Zeus

- Volcanoes representing gateways to the underworld or the wrath of the fire gods

- deities controlling aspects of nature and/or the elements (fire, wind, water, storms, harvest)

- hero's weapons/blessings: Odysseus' bow, Arthur's sword, Achilles invulnerability, Indiana Jones' whip, Wonder Woman's rope/cuffs, etc

- Stories of judgment and a terrible flood (Noah's Ark) and a man who is called to rescue humanity are paralleled all over the Middle East, Asia, Africa, South America, etc

- Stories of creation

- Stories of gods fathering children

RELIGIOUS FIGURES:

- Buddha

- Mohammed

- Jesus

- Moses

MODERN/CONTEMPORARY FIGURES:

- Barak Obama - George Washington

- John F. Kennedy - Mother Teresa

GAMING:

- Dungeons and Dragons

- Zelda

STORY TELLING (LITERATURE, MOVIES, ETC)

- Beowulf

- Harry Potter

- LotR

- Arthurian Tales

- Cirque de Freak

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- Men in Black

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- Heroes

- Lost

STAGE ONE: DEPARTURE

1. THE CALL TO ADVENTURE

The call to adventure is the point in a person's life when they are first given notice that everything is going to change, whether they know it or not.

2. 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, etc.

3. SUPERNATURAL AID

Once the hero has committed to the quest, consciously or unconsciously, his or her guide and magical helper appear, or become known.

4. THE CROSSING OF THE FIRST THRESHOLD

The point where the person actually crosses into the field of adventure, leaving the limits of their known world and venture into an unknown/dangerous realm where the rules and limits are unknown

5. THE BELLY OF THE WHALE

Represents the final separation from the person they were before their adventure began. It is the point when the person is transitioning between worlds and selves. The separation is being made/recognized between the old world/self and the potential for a new world/self. The experiences that finalizes the separation is often symbolized by something dark, unknown and frightening.

THE BIBLE

- Moses (the burning bush speaks)

- Jonah (God calls him to go to Ninevah)

- Moses says he's the wrong guy for the job

- Jonah runs away and jumps on a ship,

- God says Aaron (the brother) will speak and Moses' staff will provide signs/wonders

- Jonah repents and the storm ends/he is swallowed by a whale.

- Moses goes to Egypt

- After Jonah is tossed in the ocean, he is swallowed by a whale

- Moses spends 40 years in the wilderness

- Jonah spends 3 days in the belly of the fish

SPIDERMAN

- Peter yearns to be someone great
- Peter has a chance to stop a thief
- "With great power comes great responsibility."

- Peter doesn't stop the thief who eventually kills his uncle.
- Peter tries to pull back and ignore that he is able to make a difference

- The radioactive spider that bites Peter gives him "powers"
- The ironic twist of fate that Peter lets a crook get away who ends up killing his uncle pushes him onto the hero's path

- Peter's guilt pushes him to embrace his role as Spiderman

- After time of internal struggle, Peter begins to accept his role as a crime fighter. He leaves behind his shy, immature self and becomes a stronger, independent, confident person.

STAGE TWO: INITIATION

1. 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.

2. THE MEETING WITH THE GODDESS

The meeting with the goddess represents the point in the adventure when the person experiences a love that has the power and significance of unconditional love. This is often represented by the person finding the person that he or she loves most completely or by the person finding a cause they believe is of utmost importance.

3. THE TEMPTRESS/TEMPTATION

At one level, this step is about those temptations that may lead the hero to abandon or stray from his or her quest, which as with the Meeting with the Goddess does not necessarily have to be represented by a woman. This is when the hero must battle with their fleshy/earthy nature.

4. ATONEMENT WITH THE FATHER

The hero must confront and be initiated by whatever holds the ultimate power in his or her life. This may be a father figure/wise sage who has life and death power. All the previous steps have been heading to this place, and all events that follow flow out from this place. For the initiation and transformation to take place, the hero must be willing to “die” (literally or symbolically) so that the new self can come into being.

5. APOTHEOSIS

To apotheosize is to deify (become god-like). When someone dies a physical death, or dies to the self/their personal desires, he or she moves to a state of divine knowledge, love, compassion and peace.

SPIDER MAN

- Moses leaves Egypt and lives in the desert.

- After fleeing from God, Jonah encounters a storm, a whale,

- Moses marries

- Moses sees the BURNING BUSH and talks with God

- Jonah agrees to God's call

- Moses becomes afraid and does not want to do what God asks

- Jonah flees from God

- Moses confronts Pharaoh

- Jonah confronts the King and people of Ninevah

- Moses leaves behind his fears and agrees to speak for God in front of Pharaoh

- Jonah leaves behind his fear and agrees to speak for God in Ninevah.

- Peter begins to confront more and more criminals. He has to deal with the publicity and the incorrect label of vigilante while also dealing with the G.G.

- Aunt May tells Peter, “You were meant for great things” sending Peter down the “path” hero-dom.
- Peter's love for Mary Jane also motivates him to be a heroic figure

- Peter must deal with the love he has for Mary-Jane, which tempts him to leave behind his life as Spider Man and just be a “normal” guy

- Peter must deal with the memory of his dead uncle and the guilt he feels over his death.

- The memory of his uncle and his uncle's charge that “with great power comes great responsibility” continue to motivate Peter

- In knowing that his best friend's father is the Green Goblin AND that the GG will not hesitate to hurt MJ to get to him, Peter must deny his feelings and come to a place of acceptance of his role as Spiderman.

6. 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.

STAGE THREE: RETURN

1. REFUSAL OF THE RETURN

The hero must struggle with the desire to stay where they are at (now that they have accomplished their goal) and leave the world/humanity where it was when the hero left it.

2. THE MAGIC FLIGHT

Sometimes the hero must escape with the boon. If it is something that the gods have been jealously guarding, the hero must escape from the wrath of the divine.

3. 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.

4. THE CROSSING OF THE RETURN THRESHOLD

The process through which the hero/heroine retains the wisdom gained on the quest and/or integrates that wisdom into a human life and determines how to share the wisdom with the world.

5. MASTER OF THE TWO WORLDS

The hero achieves a balance between the material and spiritual/supernatural worlds. They have become comfortable and competent in both the inner and outer worlds and can cross between them.

6. FREEDOM TO LIVE

Mastery of the two worlds 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.

- Moses accomplishes his task of freeing the Children of Israel

- Jonah accomplishes his task and Ninevah repents.

- Moses tires of leading the Hebrew people and several times wants to give up being the leader

- Moses and the Children of Israel are protected by a pillar of fire and smoke and also flee across the Red Sea

- Pillar of Fire/Smoke
- Angel in the Burning Bush

SPIDER MAN

- Peter needs to battle the GG and destroy him so that nobody else is hurt
- Peter wants MJ to fall in love with him, not Spiderman.

Peter wants to stop caring/worrying about people and just worry about his own life now.

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CHARACTER ARCHETYPES:

1. **The Hero/ Heroine:** the protagonist or central character, whose primary purpose is to separate from the ordinary world and sacrifice himself for the service of the journey at hand—to answer the challenge, complete the quest and restore the ordinary world's balance.
2. **Mentor:** provides motivation, insights and training to help the hero.
3. **Threshold Guardian:** protects the special world and its secrets from the hero, and provides essential tests to prove a hero's commitment and worth. The threshold guardian is usually not the story's antagonist but may be a henchman/servant of the antagonist. The threshold guardian can also be a potential ally.
4. **Herald(s):** issue challenges and announce the coming of significant change. They can make their appearance anytime during a journey, but often appear at the beginning of the journey to announce a call to adventure.
5. **Shapeshifter:** misleads the hero by hiding a their true intentions and loyalties. The shapeshifter changes role or personality, often in significant ways, and is hard to understand.
6. **Shadow:** represents the darkest desires or may symbolize our greatest fears. Shadows may not be all bad, and may reveal admirable, even redeeming qualities. The hero's enemies and villains often wear the shadow mask.
7. **Trickster:** enjoy the disruption of the normal way of things, turning the ordinary world into chaos. They may make characters see the absurdity of the situation and perhaps force a change in the outcome of the story.