

Power of Myth

Lesson 2: The Hero's Journey as Monomyth

1.28.2018

Objectives: Introduce “Hero’s Journey” so common in mythology that Joseph Campbell dubbed it the *monomyth*. Explore elements of that journey across differing films.

Materials: Laptop/Youtube access, pen/cils, lesson attachments.

Time allotments suggested and meant to be adapted for **75 minute class**.

1. **Nametags and Graffiti Wall** (5 minutes before class begins)

- Make nametags using blank paper, markers, and holders. Youth can create their own unique but LEGIBLE nametag. Make it a regular practice to wear nametags.
- NO “Graffiti Wall” questions today: Instead, pass out matching activity sheet (attached). Invite youth to match the Hero to the Heroic Quest.
- Teachers complete attendance sheets.

2. **Silly Fun: Heroes and Heroic Quests** (5 minutes max)

Review matching activity as a class and see how everyone did. Youth who did not correctly match is invited to attempt their best “one line” impersonation of that hero.

Answers: Prometheus (D); Frodo (G); Hercules (F); Luke Skywalker (H); Simba (L); Harry Potter (E); Jason (J); Saint George (I); Odysseus (K); Achilles (A); Beowulf (C); Percy Jackson (B)

3. **Chalice Lighting:** Light the chalice, saying these words together: “*We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith; the light of truth and the warmth of love.*”

Teacher reads: (from our Unitarian ancestor, Ralph Waldo Emerson)

“A hero is no braver than any other man, but he is braver for five minutes longer.”

4. **Joys and Sorrows** (10 minutes): Listening is a precious gift that we offer one another at church. Using the balance scale and the blue (sorrows) and yellow (joys) stones, invite youth to share a joy and/or a sorrow from the past week, as a way of *meeting* one another with our lives and *sharing* in community. You will want to set limits (e.g. two stones max per person) so that no one monopolizes sharing time.

Each Sunday, a copy of the congregation’s *Embracing Meditation* will be made available to your class. Share this information, putting in stones for those whose names are being spoken in the Sanctuary.

5. The Hero's Journey: Humanity's Monomyth (15 minutes)

Teacher reads definition of Hero's Journey: *"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."*

If we break this definition down, we can see 17 distinct stages. Not all myths contain every one of the 17 stages (cartoon attachment depicts fewer stages). And other scholars disagree with Campbell's monomyth, questioning whether there actually is a "mono-" or single mythic pattern among the world's diverse mythology. But for Joseph Campbell, this recognizable pattern seemed to exist in dominant myths across numerous cultures, and he wanted to study that pattern. Campbell called this dominant pattern the "monomyth" ("the ONE myth that shows up everywhere").

- Using attached resource, read the 17 steps aloud as a class, going around in circle of youth volunteering to read.

6. Screening: The Call to Adventure (20 minutes)

Teacher summarizes: The moment of the "call"—when the hero's suspicions begin to materialize that s/he is not an ordinary human condemned to live a small, boring life—is often the most compelling moment in the monomyth pattern for young people. It coincides with youth's developmental task of shaping an identity and tapping their potential.

Watch "call to adventure" moments from several films. Whether youth have seen and know the full plot of each film, help youth begin recognizing characteristic elements of "call" narratives:

- **Star Wars:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFI5w_e3Ma8&list=PL7ikRW-miy1QCaTq4r-1S1D-kD4IP3z7F&index=2
 - 2nd segment: Princess Leia's message (3:52 min)
 - (will switch over to) 3rd segment: Binary Sunset (2:38 min)
- **Lord of the Rings:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqY83YjAoJE> (3:27 min)
- **Shrek:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lphaGSJ7qbE> (3:17 min)
- **Lion King:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBIDvdIpHlk> (3:27 min)
- **Percy Jackson:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QnrN5UHUwAg> (0:54 min)

7. Questions for Discussion that compare/contrast among films (15 minutes)

- Did any of these heroes learn or confirm something unusual about the circumstances of their birth? (Usually, heroes are born into danger, royalty, or unique prophecy.)

- How did any of these heroes feel about their life in the “hut,” their small and ordinary life?
- What different kinds of “call” were depicted in these films: Who was persuaded? Tricked? Invited? Forced? Any hero just up and decide to go on a quest?
- If you were setting out on a hero’s journey, how do you imagine your call might come? Would you be tricked, invited, persuaded, forced to go on the journey?
- Do any of the heroes in these films refuse the call? What happens then?
- Is the supernatural mentor present yet in any of these myths? Hinted at?
- Why are all the heroes male? (Campbell notes that all the great **myths** are about males told from the male perspective. He makes the point that women, throughout human history, were likely “too damned busy to sit around and make up stories.” So interestingly, **fairy tales** feature female protagonists, created from women’s imaginations told to their children across generations. Many fairy tales also follow mythic patterns.)

8. Open Sharing: Call moments in our personal stories? (10 minutes)

Invite any willing youth (and teachers can lead setting tone) to share a “call” moment in their lives, when their life-story took a dramatic turn and set them on a new path. (E.g., adoption of a sibling? An important request from friend? An illness? Relocating to a new place? Invite to join a “Black Lives Matter” protest? Etc.)

9. Say goodbye until next time: Extinguish the chalice, saying together:

“May the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts.”

10. Help clean up classroom before leaving: Please keep regular practice of readying classroom for the next class.

- leave lesson plan and all materials organized
- return blue/yellow stones to containers
- wipe the whiteboard clean
- tables and chairs neatly returned
- nametags collected in Ziploc bag
- leave any comments for RE staff on attendance sheets

Viewing clips, in order of sequence:

Watch “call to adventure” moments from several films:

Star Wars: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFI5w_e3Ma8&list=PL7ikRW-miy1QCaTq4r-1S1D-kD4IP3z7F&index=2

- 2nd segment: Princess Leia’s message (3:52 min)
- (will switch over to) 3rd segment: Binary Sunset (2:38 min)

Lord of the Rings: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqY83YjAoJE> (3:27 min)

Shrek: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lphaGSJ7qbE> (3:17 min)

Lion King: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBIDvdIpHlk> (3:27 min)

Percy Jackson: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QnrN5UHUwAg> (0:54 min)