

Power of Myth

Lesson 4: Mythic Quests

2.25.2018

Objectives: Continue monomyth of “Hero’s Journey” and their mythic quest. Explore elements of that journey across differing films.

Materials: Index cards, basket, lesson attachments, worship programs.

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.
- “Graffiti Wall” questions: Write the following on whiteboard. Invite youth as they arrive to grab a marker and weigh in with their responses:
 - ▶ Who would win if Luke and Harry Potter dueled?
 - ▶ From your most recent worship (likely Story Sunday, Feb. 11), what’s one thing that you remember as interesting or meaningful?
- Teachers complete attendance sheets.
- **Please take a few minutes to invite reflections from youth about their recent worship experience. Use copies of worship programs as helpful reminder.**

2. Silly Fun: Superhero Who? (5 minutes max)

Youth write their names on index cards and put into basket. Each youth randomly pulls a classmate’s name from basket, making sure no one sees the name. The goal is to see who can correctly guess the selected youth’s identity by imaging them as superheroes and offering creative responses to the following questions:

- If this person were a superhero, their superpower would be....
- If this person were a superhero, their one weakness or vulnerability would be....
- If this person were a superhero, the fashion-style for their costume would be...

The first one to correctly guess gets a point. See who has the most points!

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 Joseph Campbell)

“A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself.”

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. **Mapping the Journey: Analysis of our favorite hero's quest** (25 minutes)

Teacher reviews 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."*

- Review the mythic pattern of the hero's journey, breaking this definition down into 17 distinct stages (see attachment). For Joseph Campbell, this pattern seemed to exist in the dominant myths across numerous cultures. Campbell called this dominant pattern the "monomyth" ("the ONE myth that shows up everywhere").
- Pass out attached handout "Mapping the Journey." Youth work as a pair, selecting their favorite hero from films/books to analyze their hero's journey. (See reverse side of handout for examples of some of the stages.) Youth fill in blanks with their best sense of what narrative moment corresponds to each element of the mythic journey. (*Not all elements may have corresponding moments in the film narrative.)
- Gather youth back and go around the room with each pair sharing their work.

Questions for Discussion:

- What mythic elements were missing from your hero's journey?
- What parts take up the most time in the movie (or book from which it was taken)?
- Which is the part of the journey that most grabs your attention and speaks to you personally? Why do you think?

6. **Other Types of Heroes** (25 minutes)

Teacher summarizes: Main heroes often fit into the category of heroes that include types like the "loner" or "flawed" heroes. But sometimes, there are other "*minor*" heroes who accompany the main hero on the adventure. These minor heroes usually fit one of these types:

- **The Reluctant Hero** who gets "roped into" the cause and is clearly not as committed as the main hero. Usually, this person gets tricked into helping, or helps because

they want part of a reward or they are just in the wrong place at the wrong time. This character in the myth, however, often ends up helping to save the day.

- **The Romantic Hero** is out of place in his/her world and rejected by society, and so the “wilderness” or difficult place they have to journey through is usually everyday life.
- **Tragic Heroes** are doomed from the beginning, taken down by their own personal flaw or blindspot, no matter who tries to help them.

Questions for Discussion:

- Among the heroes we have considered—main characters or secondary characters—who might qualify as one of these three types? Han Solo? Percy Jackson? Samwise Ganges? Ron Weasley? Others?
- If our heroes do have a flaw, what is it? What’s something about them that constantly gets them into the trouble and shapes their adventures?
 - What is Luke’s flaw? Harry Potter’s flaw? Simba’s flaw?
- Female heroes often play an interesting role in films. What are the similarities between Princess Leia, Hermione, Nala, or Thalia Grace?
- How are female characters involved in the hero’s journey in *The Lord of the Rings*?
- Are there female heroes who challenge traditional views about female heroes? For youth who have seen, does *Wonder Woman (2017)*?

7. Real Heroes in Our Lives (10 minutes)

Invite youth to share a real hero in their lives: What makes that person your hero? What part of your hero’s story first grabbed your attention? Do they have a flaw?

8. 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.”

9. 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