

# Power of Myth

## Lesson 2: The Hero's Journey as Monomyth

9.26.2021

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**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 for 50 minute class, followed by 25 minute closing service.

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### 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)

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); Ray (K); Athena (F); Simba (M); Harry Potter (E); Wonder Woman (B); Moana (C); Saint George (J); Odysseus (L); Black Panther (N); Raya (H); Luke Skywalker (I); Achilles (A)

### 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. The Hero's Journey: Humanity's Monomyth (10 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.” (from Joseph Campbell, scholar)

**Teacher summarizes:** If we break Campbell’s 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 question 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”).

- Pass out “The Hero’s Journey” (attached). Go around, taking turns to read aloud all 17 steps.
- Look over the two visual depictions, condensed into 12 steps. Ask youth what similarities and differences they notice between the three.

## 5. Screening: *The Call to Adventure* (20 minutes)

**Teacher summarizes:** The moment of the “call”—when the hero’s suspicions begin to materialize that they are not an ordinary human condemned to live a small, boring life—is often the most compelling moment for youth and young adults going through their own task of shaping an identity and tapping their potential.

**Watch** “call to adventure” moments from several films. Whether or not youth have seen and know the full plot of each film, help youth begin recognizing characteristic elements of “call” narratives:

- **Star Wars:**
  - <https://youtu.be/pUaxXsqGeFI?t=124> (4:19 min, but cued to start at 2:04) Princess Leia’s message, *A New Hope*
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70aWl\\_5Zc04](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70aWl_5Zc04) (3:53 min) Rey finds Luke’s lightsaber, *The Force Awakens*
- **Moana:** [https://youtu.be/KGqBfyQFG\\_g?t=30](https://youtu.be/KGqBfyQFG_g?t=30) (2:44 min, but cued to start at 0:30)
- **Raya and the Last Dragon:** <https://youtu.be/kSYkaviYCYg?t=30> (1:46 min, but cued to start at 0:30)
- **Black Panther:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=58SDryogTrw> (3:37 min)
- **Lord of the Rings:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqY83YjAoJE> (3:27 min)

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

- How did any of these heroes feel about their life beforehand in the “hut,” their small and ordinary life? 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.)

- 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?
- Do any of the heroes in these films refuse the call? What happens then? Who or what initiated the call?
- Is the supernatural mentor present yet in any of these myths? Hinted at?
- Have you experienced a “call” moment in your life?
  - A moment when you felt a sense of purpose beyond yourself?
  - A moment when you experienced your heart tugged by something or someone, and you couldn’t take your attention away?
  - A moment when your life-story took a dramatic turn and set you 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?).
- 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?

7. **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.”*

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

- leave lesson plan and all materials organized
- 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:

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