

Essay Assignment 2 **The Hero's Journey**

Keeping in mind our in-class readings and discussion, compose a 5-7 page essay which explores the hero and/or the heroic quest. For a model, you should follow the basic format for a classical essay as discussed in class. You may pick one of the following options as the general topic of your paper.

Option 1: The Hero's Journey

Write a carefully argued analysis of the hero "monomyth" as described by Campbell as it is played out in a popular film or novel. Your paper should include at least these elements:

- An identification of the film or novel's hero. Does the hero act in accordance with the hero's journey schema? That is, does the hero do what the hero's journey framework says he or she will do?
- An enumeration of the basic elements of the hero's journey as described by Campbell, and a parallel description of how that pattern is worked out in the film or novel IN DETAIL.
- A detailed analysis of the meaning of these mythic events as enacted in the film or novel. In other words, what is happening in the lives of the characters as the myth develops? (For example, what is really going on when Luke faces his father near the end?)

Difficulty level: easy.

Option 2: The Female Hero

The traditional quest hero is assumed to be a male who is separated from his known world, is initiated into a new consciousness, then returns to his community. (According to Campbell, in traditional mythologies women usually represent creation and ultimate wisdom and therefore don't need to make a journey.) However, when the hero of a story is a woman her quest is somewhat different from the male pattern. The overall movement is the same, but the kinds of challenges, confrontations, goals, and ends may differ. (Consider, for example, the differences in the journey of Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* versus Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars*.) Write an essay in which you examine the female quest pattern. Why is the female pattern different than the male pattern? What psychological or social differences does it reflect? Have our perceptions of the female hero changed in recent years?

You will want to begin your research with Lee Edwards' essay "The Labors of Psyche: Toward a Theory of Female Heroism" (course packet) and Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope's book, *The Female Hero in American and British Literature* (on reserve), a female-oriented version of Campbell's *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* which chronicles the archetypal patterns of the female quest in literature.

Difficulty level: easy-moderate.

Option 3: Biblical Heroes

Choose among one of the following Old Testament heroes—Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Ruth, David, Job—and write an essay in which you analyze that hero through the lens of Campbell's *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*. What insights does Campbell give you into that character as hero? How does his chapter on the importance of the hero's movement through space and time ("The Departure") correspond to your understanding of the biblical tale? How does Campbell's text inform the biblical account and vice versa?

Difficulty level: moderate-hard.

Option 4: The Classical Hero

In chapter 15 of *Poetics*, Aristotle describes the tragic hero as a protagonist who is otherwise perfect except for a tragic or fatal flaw that eventually leads to his demise. In fact, an Aristotelian tragic hero must have four characteristics: goodness, superiority, a tragic flaw, and a realization of both his flaw and his inevitable demise. Write an essay in which you describe the characteristics of the hero as defined by Aristotle and apply those to the hero of a contemporary film or novel. Some questions you may wish to consider are: What similarities or differences exist between Aristotle's formulation of the tragic hero and Campbell's depiction of the hero quest? How well does Aristotle's formulation of the tragic hero apply to contemporary heroes?

Difficulty level: easy-moderate.

Option 5: Other Archetypal Characters

In the course of his or her journey, the hero will encounter other archetypal characters that typically either aid or hinder the hero in his or her quest. Among the most prominent of these is the Sage (a helper), the Trickster (sometimes helpful, sometimes not), and the Shadow (often the villain). Other archetypes that appear in various roles include the Mother, the Child, and the Animas/Anima. Choose one of these archetypal characters and write an analysis of that character in Jungian terms. A few questions you may wish to consider in your essay include: What is the relationship of this character to the hero? What psychological function does it serve and why is it important to both the story and the hero's completion of

his or her journey? What forms does this character take when it appears to the hero? What is the symbolic importance of those forms?

Though you must limit your essay to one archetype, you may use more than one film or story to illustrate your main points.

Difficulty level: moderate-hard.

Writing Requirements

Length: 5-7 pages.

Sources: At least three. Your sources must meet the following minimum requirements:

- At least one source must come from the readings in our course packet, or from either *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* or *The Power of Myth* by Joseph Campbell. (Both books are on reserve in the library.)
- At least one source must come from books, magazines, or journals from the University's libraries and/or Academic Search Premier (EBSCOhost).
- Although you may use them in your paper, dictionaries and general purpose encyclopedias (e.g. Encarta, Wikipedia) do not count toward your source requirements.

These are, of course, the minimum requirements; you may use as many sources as are necessary to adequately explore your topic. Always keep in mind that the sources you use reflect on how seriously you approached your research, and you will be evaluated on their applicability and strength.

Due Dates

Mon. Mar 19: Peer draft (bring two copies).

Wed. Mar. 21: Final draft.

Submitting Your Work

Essays must be submitted in a plain, 2-pocket folder with your name clearly written on the outside. Plastic folders or folders containing school logos or other decorative art will not be accepted. The following items must be included inside your folder:

- Final draft of essay, stapled, in a pocket by itself.
- First draft of essay I reviewed (if applicable).
- Completed Peer Evaluation Forms.
- Essay Grade Sheet (available in the "Notes & Forms" section of this Web site).

Penalties: Failure to turn in a peer draft on the due date will result in a one half letter grade penalty on your final paper. Failure to turn in peer evaluations on the due date will result in a one half letter grade penalty on your final paper. If late, your final draft will be docked one half letter grade for being late, then another half grade for each calendar day it's late.

Grading Criteria

When assigning grades, I reserve "A" for exceptional papers; you do not get an "A" simply by addressing the topic in a standard way and avoiding mechanical errors. (See the "Course Policies" section of the Web site for a more complete description of grading policies.)

I will assess you in the following three areas:

Invention

Introduction and Thesis: Are these components of your essay clearly written, easily identifiable, and effective in presenting the topic, providing direction to the paper as a whole, and discussing the significance of the topic?

Accuracy, Wording, and Research: Have you used the required outside sources to support your argument, and when using these sources, do you express their concepts fairly and accurately? NOTE: Failure to meet research requirements may result in an 'E' for the essay. Have you integrated quotes smoothly? If you are paraphrasing, do you use your own words yet still remain faithful to the author's original meaning? Have you expressed your ideas clearly and concisely? Is the essay in your own words?

Lines of Argument: Have you clearly and extensively defined necessary terms? Have you illustrated your criteria with specific examples and, if necessary, contrasting examples? Have you established ethical, logical, and emotional reasons (evidence) in support of your thesis, in order of importance?

Revision: Are there substantial changes between the draft and final versions of the essay? Does your final version meet the length requirements?

Organization

Beginning: Have you followed the organizational plan discussed in class? Have you offered an introduction in which you explain the issue and show why it is relevant? Have you presented a clear thesis that guides and unifies the essay?

Middle: Are your paragraphs focused and well developed? Do your paragraphs contain topic sentences? Have you revised for clarity and worked on eliminating wordy, unclear, and/or repetitive areas in your essay? Have you included transitional words between sentences and paragraphs to make your ideas flow more smoothly?

End: Do you offer a conclusion which does more than merely repeat your major ideas?

Style

Format: Does your paper adhere to MLA format, including font and point size? Have you correctly cited from your sources and inserted a parenthetical citation after each quote? Have you introduced the quote in an effective way? Have you correctly used MLA formatting and included a "Works Cited" page? NOTE: Failure to observe proper MLA format may result in a zero (0) style grade.

Tone: Is your tone appropriate for the chosen audience?

Grammar/Sentences: Is your paper free from grammatical errors such as sentence fragments, fused sentences, comma splices, mixed constructions, apostrophe errors, subject/verb and pronoun/antecedent disagreement? Is the essay free from spelling errors?
NOTE: Five (5) or more grammar/sentence errors may result in a zero (0) style grade.