

RISING 9TH GRADE - ANCIENT LITERATURE – COLLEGE PREP

MRS. ZACCARO

REQUIRED READING:

1. **“The Hero’s Journey”** – Adapted from Joseph Campbell’s *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. *Pages 1-7 of this document.
 2. ***A Walk Across America, Peter Jenkins*** – Read and take notes.
 3. **Genesis Chapters 37-50** – Read and take notes.
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About *A Walk Across America, Peter Jenkins*

Peter Jenkins was a disillusioned young man who needed many questions answered about America and his place in it when he set off on foot from his home state of New York and hiked – accompanied only by his faithful dog Cooper – southward along much of the Appalachian Trail and farther south. Along the way, Jenkins chronicles his adventures, challenges, new friendships, risks and, most memorably, his discovery of both a country he had misunderstood and the deeper, eternal part of himself. Jenkins’ *A Walk Across America* is worthwhile as it displays the Hero’s Journey and presents a person weighed down by cynicism wrestling with questions of faith and being surprised by hope and love.

Please read “The Hero’s Journey” below. This will provide you with the framework with which to think about *A Walk Across America* and the reading in Genesis. We will explore how “The Hero’s Journey” is evident in these two reading selections.

“The Hero’s Journey”

Read the following information. Highlight and take notes in the margins as you read. We will discuss this information during the first few weeks of school. Anticipate a quiz or test to follow our discussion.

“The Hero’s Journey” is a concept that grew out of Joseph Campbell’s 1949 book of comparative mythology entitled *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and posits that every hero travels the same path of adventure: departure from a known place to an unknown, a gathering of allies and friends, guidance from a mentor, battles against enemies and evil, a descent into hell or death, loss, redemption, victory ... and more. We will apply this template to many stories we read this year, ranging from tales of Gilgamesh to Perseus to The Odyssey to a recent account of a man’s physical and spiritual journey across America in Peter Jenkins’ non-fiction *A Walk Across America*, which is a Summer Reading assignment.

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This handout borrows heavily from Joseph Campbell's 1949 book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. This material attempts to express Campbell's view of the archetypal hero and the quest or journey the character undertakes in his or her story. Campbell's basic premise in that book is that in all myths and epic adventures and hero's journeys are, in their essence, the same story – a Monomyth. Gilgamesh, Odysseus and Aeneas all undertake the same journey structurally – as do Frodo, Dorothy, Harry Potter and Luke Skywalker – and most Disney princesses – and Westley – and so on. The “Elements” below represent the steps in the Hero's Journey which create a foundational story-telling pattern.

The Elements of the Hero's Journey

1. The Ordinary World: This step refers to the hero's normal life at the start of the story, before the adventure begins.
2. Call to Adventure: The hero is faced with something that makes him begin his adventure. This might be a problem or a challenge he needs to overcome.
3. Refusal of the Call: The hero attempts to refuse the adventure because he is afraid.
4. Meeting with the Mentor: The hero encounters someone who can give him advice and ready him for the journey ahead.
- ** Catalyst – An outside and compelling force causes the Hero to leave the Ordinary World and venture into the Unknown World.
5. Crossing the First Threshold: The hero leaves his ordinary world for the first time and crosses the threshold into adventure / the unknown.
- ** Talisman – Often, the Hero receives a weapon, gift, symbol or some talisman that offers power or inspiration to the Hero during her or his Quest.
6. Tests, Allies, Enemies / Challenges and Temptations: The hero learns the rules of his new world. During this time, he endures tests of strength of will, meets friends, and comes face to face with foes.
7. Approach: Setbacks occur, sometimes causing the hero to try a new strategy or adopt new ideas.
8. Supreme Ordeal: The hero experiences a major obstacle, such as a life-or-death crisis.
9. Reward: After surviving death, the hero earns his reward (a gift, the object he has sought, a victory, love ...) or accomplishes his goal.
10. The Road Back: The hero begins his journey back to his ordinary life.
11. Resurrection Hero - The hero faces a final test where everything is at stake and he must use everything he has learned

12. Return with Elixir: The hero brings his knowledge – the “elixir” back to the ordinary, known world, where he applies it to help all who remain there. It can be a tangible reward or new-found wisdom that heals the known world to which the hero returns.

Joseph Campbell, an American psychologist and mythological researcher, wrote a famous book entitled *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. In his lifelong research, Campbell discovered many common patterns running through hero myths and stories from around the world. Years of research lead Campbell to discover basic and common stages that almost every hero-quest goes through (no matter what culture the myth is a part of). He calls this common structure “the monomyth” – meaning the single myth that all cultures recognize and enjoy and which unifies mankind through myth and stories.

George Lucas, the creator of Star Wars, claims that Campbell’s monomyth was the inspiration for his groundbreaking films. Lucas also believes that Star Wars is such a popular saga because it taps into a timeless story-structure which has existed for thousands of years.

Many followers of Campbell have defined the stages of his monomyth in various ways, sometimes supplying different names for certain stages. For this reason there are many different versions of the Hero’s Journey that retain the same basic elements, as we will see as we read and discuss both ancient stories and more modern tales. The Steps in the Hero’s Journey:

The ORDINARY WORLD

Heroes exist in a world is considered ordinary by those who live there. Often the heroes are considered odd by those in the known world and possess some ability or characteristic that makes them feel out-of-place.

- The Wonderful Wizard of Oz: Dorothy in Kansas
- The Hobbit: Bilbo Baggins in Hobbiton
- Star Wars: Luke Skywalker on Tatooine
- The Lion King: Simba at Pride Rock

The CALL to ADVENTURE

For heroes to begin their journeys, they must be called away from the ordinary world. Fantastic quests don’t happen in everyday life. Heroes must be removed from their typical environment. Most heroes show a reluctance to leave their home, friends, and life to journey on a quest. But in the end they accept their destiny.

Usually there is a discovery, some event, or some danger that starts them on the heroic path. Heroes find a mystic object or discover their world is in danger. In some cases, heroes happen upon their quest by accident. Campbell puts it like this, “A blunder—the merest chance—reveals an unsuspected world.”

The new world the hero is forced into is much different than the old one. Campbell describes this new world as a “fateful region of both treasure and danger...a distant land, a forest, a kingdom underground, beneath the waves, or above the sky, a secret island, lofty

mountaintop, or profound dream state...a place of strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments, superhuman deeds, and impossible delight". This description may seem pretty vague, but think of all the various fantasy realms characters have entered throughout the years: Middle Earth, Oz, Narnia, Wonderland. It could even be outer space, a haunted house, or the Matrix. Regardless of the details, the new world is sure to be filled with adventure.

- The Wonderful Wizard of Oz: The tornado
- The Hobbit: Gandalf the wizard arrives
- Star Wars: R2D2's cryptic message

REFUSAL of the CALL (Refusal of the Quest)

During the Call to Adventure heroes are given a task or quest which only they can complete. They are faced with a choice: accept the quest or deny it. Their choice might seem like a no-brainer. If they don't accept the quest, there won't be much of a story—or will there? Actually there are stories where heroes don't accept their destinies. When this happens, the stage is set for disaster. There's a reason why the powers-that-be have chosen a particular hero. A refusal of the quest only brings trouble.

King Minos, the monarch of Crete who antagonizes the Greek hero Theseus, does not do what the gods ask of him. Poseidon, Lord of the Seas, sends him a beautiful white bull. The god's only order is that Minos must sacrifice the creature back to him. After seeing the magnificent beast, Minos decides he just can't bring himself to do what the god asks and keeps the bull as a personal trophy.

Enraged, Poseidon vows revenge and causes Minos' wife to burn with lust for her husband's prized beast. The rest of this story is strictly NC-17. It results in the birth of the Minotaur, a creature half-bull, half-human, a curse to his father King Minos.

Campbell notes that heroes who refuse their quest often become characters in need of rescuing or in Minos' case, the villain of another hero's journey.

- Star Wars: Luke refuses the quest until he learns his aunt and uncle are dead
- The Lion King: Simba refuses to return to Pride Rock and accept his destiny
- Groundhog Day: Example of the negative cycle caused by refusing the call

MEETING THE MENTOR

The Hero meets and receives aid and the urge to take on his or her Quest from a mentor; this is a wiser and even supernatural figure. Supernatural doesn't have to mean magical. There are plenty of hero stories that don't have wizards or witches per say. Supernatural simply means "above the laws of nature." Heroes are almost always started on their journey by a character who has mastered the laws of the outside world and come back to bestow this wisdom upon them. This supernatural character often gives them the means to complete the quest. Some of the time the gift is simply wisdom. Other times it is an object with magical powers. In every instance it is something the hero needs to succeed. As Campbell says, "One

has only to know and trust, and the ageless guardians will appear.” The job of the supernatural assistor is to give the heroes what they need to finish the quest—not finish it for them.

- The Hobbit: Gandalf
- Star Wars: Obi-Wan Kenobi
- Cinderella: Fairy Godmother

THE CATALYST

While not officially part of Campbell’s Hero’s Journey, a Hero’s Quest often starts because an outside event or force changes the life of the Hero and demands a response. This response – action that takes the Hero into his adventure – begins the Hero’s Journey outside the Ordinary World.

- The tornado in The Wizard of Oz
- The arrival of new threats (the Black Riders) that require the Ring be destroyed in The Lord of the Rings
- Hagrid and others summoning Harry to Hogwarts (as a prelude to him becoming Voldemort’s foe).
- The Droids’ arrival – and R2’s playing of the message from Leia – as a means of alerting Luke to the greater life in the galaxy and his need to fight the Empire.

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD / ENTERING the UNKNOWN

As they embark on their journey, the heroes enter a world they have never experienced before. Very often it is filled with supernatural creatures, breathtaking sights, and the constant threat of death. Unlike the heroes’ home, this outside world has its own rules, and they quickly learn to respect these rules as their endurance, strength, and mettle are tested time and time again. After all, it is not the end of the journey which teaches, but the journey itself.

- The Wizard of Oz: Dorothy must learn the rules of Oz
- The Matrix: Neo must come to grips with the realities and unrealities of the Matrix

TALISMAN

A Special (and often magical) items that assist the heroes on their quest.

- The Wizard of Oz: Ruby Slippers
- The Hobbit: The Ring
- Star Wars: Lightsaber

TESTS, ALLIES & HELPERS

Tests – threats, fights, moral choices, demands of the Hero’s body and soul – await the Hero as he ventures into the Unknown World. As a counter-balance to new threats and tests, Heroes meet and receive help from Allies and Helpers. Every hero needs a helper, much like every superhero needs a sidekick. Without the assistance of their companions and helpers along the way, most heroes would fail miserably. For example, in the Greek hero story of Theseus, Minos’ daughter Ariadne, after falling hopelessly in love, helps Theseus navigate the Labyrinth. She does this by holding one end of a golden thread while Theseus works his way inward to slay the Minotaur. Without her help, Theseus would never have fulfilled his quest or found his way out of the maze once he did so.

- Lord of the Rings: The Black Riders and a trek across all of Middle Earth / Gandalf, Sam, Merry, Pippin, Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli, Boromir
- The Wizard of Oz: Winged Monkeys and a perilous Journey / The Tin Woodsman, Scarecrow, and Cowardly Lion
- Star Wars: Stormtroopers in pursuit who destroy his home / Ben Kenobi, Han Solo, Leia, Chewbacca, R2D2, C-3PO

APPROACH

The Hero and his/her Allies prepare for the Supreme Ordeal.

- Luke, Leia and others plan their assault on the Death Star
- Woody and Buzz figure out how to defeat Sid and scare him straight in his backyard
- Aragorn plans an attack on Mordor to draw attention from Mt Doom
- King Peter plans for his single combat against King Miraz of the Telmarines

TESTS & The SUPREME ORDEAL (Descent into Hell)

The heroes progress through a series of tests, a set of obstacles that make them stronger, preparing them for their final showdown. At long last they reach the Supreme Ordeal, the obstacle they have journeyed so far to overcome.

All the heroes’ training and toil comes into play now. The journey has hardened them, and it’s time for them to show their prowess. Once this obstacle is overcome, the tension will be relieved. The worst is passed, and the quest, while not officially over, has succeeded.

- Star Wars: Blowing up the Death Star
- Lord of the Rings: Mount Doom
- The Wizard of Oz: Defeating the Wicked Witch
- The Odyssey, the Aeneid, Percy Jackson books: the hero journeys literally into Hell

REWARD and the ROAD BACK

Typically, there is a reward given to heroes for passing the Supreme Ordeal. It could be a kingdom. It could be the hand of a beautiful princess. It could be the Holy Grail. Whatever it is, it is a reward for the heroes' endurance and strength.

After the heroes complete the Supreme Ordeal and have the reward firmly in hand, all that is left is for them to return home. Just because the majority of the adventure has passed doesn't mean that the return journey will be smooth sailing. There are still lesser homebound obstacles to overcome.

- The Hobbit: The Battle of Five Armies
- The Lord of the Rings: Return to Hobbiton

THE RESURRECTION / RESTORING the WORLD / ELIXIR

The Hero is severely tested once more on the threshold of home. He or she is purified by a last sacrifice, another moment of death and rebirth, but on a higher and more complete level. Overcoming this last test and the subsequent purification are a form of resurrection.

Success on the heroes' quest is life-changing, for them and often for many others. By achieving victory, they have changed or preserved their original world. Often they return with "the elixir," an object or personal ability that allows them to save their world.

The heroes have also grown in spirit and strength. They have proved themselves worthy for marriage, kingship, or queenship. Their mastery of the outside world qualifies them to be giants in their own.

- Lord of the Rings: Frodo saves the Shire
- Harry defeats Voldemort but at the cost of his own life; he receives life again
- The Wizard of Oz: Dorothy rids Oz of the Wicked Witch
- In Disney films, characters often die momentarily – Flynn Rider, Elsa, Sleeping Beauty (whose 100-year sleep is like a death) – only to return from the dead through the power of love or some other talisman

FINAL IDEAS:

The MONOMYTH:

Another name for The Hero's Journey. The Monomyth refers to the idea that there is ONE (Mono-) story that is the central and recurring template for all Heroes' Journeys. While Joseph Campbell's monomyth works best with the traditional form of the quest—folk and fairy tales, myths, legends, and other fantasies—it can be applied to many different genres or types of stories. A quest does not have to include swords and monsters. It can just as easily occur in the real world. The monomyth, ageless and universal, exists anywhere and everywhere.