

APPENDIX 8.4 The Stages of the Hero's Journey Defined

based on Joseph Campbell's monomyth theory

The Ordinary World:

We are introduced to the hero, usually in his or her homeland. The hero must leave this world to enter the “special” world of the journey.

Call to Adventure:

An initial event encourages the hero to accept a challenge or quest, such as choosing the fight for good over evil.

Refusal of the Call:

The hero initially refuses, preferring the relative comfort of the ordinary world. He or she may be fearful, insecure, or worried that “the call” will be a hardship.

Meeting the Mentor:

The hero is introduced to one who will support and guide him or her on the journey with advice, training, or magical gifts. The mentor may be a living being or an object. The mentor provides the hero confidence to accept the call.

Crossing the Threshold:

The hero must cross the threshold and move into a new world from the ordinary world. The threshold may be an actual structure or another type of divider between the ordinary world and the special world. This crossing indicates commitment to the journey.

Tests/Allies/Enemies:

The hero must figure out how the rules in the special world work as he or she encounters minor challenges and meets others who may turn out to be supportive team members, a sidekick, or dangerous enemies.

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Approach to the Innermost Cave:

The hero prepares for the “ordeal” or final challenge as he or she approaches the location where he or she will meet the greatest enemy. (Note that this may not literally be a cave.) For example, he or she might plan to advance toward the lair of the main enemy, plan an attack strategy, take a break for romance, or eliminate lesser enemies.

Ordeal:

The hero encounters a major life-or-death test and/or final battle with the greatest enemy. This is the climax of the journey. The hero usually experiences “death” from which he or she must be resurrected in a way that provides him or her the strength or wisdom to complete the journey.

Reward:

Also called “seizing the sword,” in this stage, the hero receives a reward for facing and overcoming the ordeal. May be a magical tool, great wisdom, an elixir, the affection of another, or a combination of items.

The Road Back:

In this stage, the hero heads home to the ordinary world. The hero may resist returning, but circumstances often force him or her to commit to return.

Resurrection:

In this stage, the hero resolves his or her problem. He or she is “reborn” with his or her original characteristics from the ordinary world in combination with the new powers, strength, and wisdom gained from the journey. He or she must accept and sometimes must prove his or her new status as “hero” to others.

Return with the Elixir:

In this stage, the hero returns to the ordinary world with the “elixir,” a great treasure or understanding to share from the journey. The hero becomes master of both worlds.