

The Hero's (or Heroic) Journey AKA the Monomyth

By Rebecca Ray

Similar to a [plot diagram](#) or the types of [literary conflict](#); the hero's journey is a pattern of structure and/or stages that a hero wades through to completion. Joseph Campbell, an American mythologist, writer and lecturer, created this cycle after researching and reviewing numerous myths and stories from different times and regions of the world. What he found was that they all share the same fundamental principles. This spawned "The Hero's Journey" also known as the Monomyth. The most basic version has 12 steps while more detailed versions can have up to 17.



Explanation of Hero's Journey

Part One - Call to Adventure

In the exposition of a hero's journey, the hero starts in the setting of their **ordinary world**. This could be the hero at home or in their natural habitat. Then, a conflict arises which **calls the hero to adventure**, where they are beckoned to leave their ordinary world in search of something. Although they usually **refuse the call** they eventually get underway knowing that they must go because something important is held in the balance of life and death.

Part Two - Supreme Ordeal or Initiation

Once they have officially begun their journey, they will meet a **mentor or helper** (known as a sidekick in some genres) and together these two will **cross the threshold**. This is the point where turning back is not an option and where they usually encounter **tests, allies, and enemies**. If they encounter a test(s) they must pass it in order to continue. If they encounter a helper(s), they are usually aided in their journey. However, if they encounter an enemy(s), they are typically hindered and must defeat them before progressing onward. There can be many or few obstacles during this stage of testing the hero's qualities.

Part Three - Unification or Transformation

After this stage the hero and allies reach the **approach**. It is here where they will prepare for the major 'challenge' in the 'new or special world.' During the approach the hero goes through an **ordeal** where they are tested to the point of near death. Their greatest fear is sometimes exposed and out of this comes a new life or revival for the hero. For their efforts in defeating the ordeal the hero reaches the **reward**. The hero takes possession of the reward ascertained by facing death. There may be a celebration but there is also the danger of losing the reward again.

Part Four - Road Back or Hero's Return

Once the reward is won, the hero and companions start on their **road back**. Occurring about three-fourths of the way through the story, the hero is ambitious to complete the adventure and return to their ordinary world with the treasure they sought. This stage is often referred to as either the **resurrections or atonement**. As they reach the line or threshold (returning from the unknown to their ordinary world) the reader arrives at the climax of the story. Here, the hero is severely tested one last time. However, this test is an attempt to foil their previous achievements. At this point the hero has come full circle the major conflict at the beginning of the journey is finally resolved. In the **return** home, the hero has now resumed life in his/her original world and all things are restored to ordinary, but now the hero is a new version of himself because of what he has learned along his journey – he has gained wisdom.