

It was suggested at the Hermetic Study Group (# 5 – Tarot for Improvers) that people explore the 22 cards of the Major Arcana in relation to the stages of the Hero's Journey or Monomyth described below; this would enable people to understand the Major Arcana as representations of stages of life, as well as spiritual and universal concept. These can be journeyed through during a lifetime, or they can form stages on a smaller journey, e.g. one's magickal and spiritual path, and initiatory period, etc. Generally speaking, it is the first card of the Major Arcana (0 The Fool) that is perceived as the hero or seeker who travels through the cards, facing various issues and truths along the way, eventually ending with the last card of the Major Arcana (XXI The World/Universe) and returning back to his state of potential at 0 The Fool once more.

Joseph Campbell's Monomyth

What human beings have in common is revealed by myths ...
—Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth*

Joseph Campbell was a famous mythologist who spent a lifetime analyzing world mythology for similarities, themes, and differences. His analysis has enabled us to see more clearly the idea that there is a common human experience and a journey that we all make throughout life—this journey comes out in the stories we tell. Campbell studied world mythology and from his research created the concept of the Monomyth. This was an over-arching story that was to be found in most Western myths (with some slight variations). Campbell said that it demonstrated Western peoples' common needs, desires, fears, and experiences. This Monomyth is surprisingly similar to the idea of a "Fool's Journey," and indeed it is often called "The Hero's Journey," with a hero undergoing trials and tribulations until he reaches a conclusion:

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.
—Joseph Campbell. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*

Campbell's Monomyth of the Hero's Journey is split into three sections: Departure, Initiation, and Return.

Departure

- 1. THE CALL TO ADVENTURE.** "Help me Obi Wan Kenobi—you're my only hope." Luke Skywalker receives this message from Princess Leia, and it is the call to adventure that starts him thinking about his origins and a life beyond Tattooine. Other calls to adventure could come in the form of a threat to the peace of the community, or the hero simply falling into it accidentally.
- 2. REFUSAL OF THE CALL.** Many would-be heroes' first response to this call is to refuse to listen: they are scared, or too busy with their current lives to consider leaving. The hero immerses himself in everyday life, trying to ignore the call. (It took Frodo Baggins 11 years after receiving the One Ring before he finally left the Shire.)
- 3. SUPERNATURAL AID.** When the hero finally accepts the adventure he is aided by a figure of authority and wisdom who possesses what appear to be supernatural or

extraordinary powers. Obi Wan Kenobi in Star Wars, Dumbledore in the Harry Potter series, and Morpheus and Trinity in The Matrix are all examples.

4. CROSSING THE FIRST THRESHOLD. Now the hero must move from his current world and way of life to a new one more in keeping with the adventure. The threshold between these two modes is guarded by an entity that can be hostile. Thus, Neo enters the Matrix for the first time and Frodo Baggins leaves the Shire beset by Black Riders.

5. THE BELLY OF THE WHALE. Named after the Biblical story of Jonah's tested faith, the hero's passing through the threshold above becomes a form of rebirth through a death-like experience. He becomes renewed and ready to face the new world of the adventure.

Initiation

1. THE ROAD OF TRIALS. Having passed through his rebirth the hero undergoes a testing period, where he faces a series of obstacles that test his worth. These trials act to teach the hero important lessons and skills, and they are either overseen or secretly aided by the "Supernatural Aid" figure. Thus, Luke Skywalker is taught to trust his feelings with a light saber aboard the Millennium Falcon, and Neo spars with Morpheus in a simulation program.

2. THE MEETING WITH THE GODDESS. The final trial is often depicted as a marriage or partnership between the hero and a mother-like figure. This represents the hero's mastery of life (represented by the feminine) as well as the totality of what can be known. When the hero is female, this becomes a male figure. Thus, Luke first sets eyes upon his sister (and initially, the object of his affections) Princess Leia and joins her in the Rebel Alliance.

3. WOMAN AS TEMPTRESS / TEMPTATION BY A FALSE PATH. As above, if the hero is female, this temptation would be a man. Here, the hero reflects upon the disunity of his understanding of truth with his experience of the world, represented by a figure of the opposite sex tempting him to a darker path. This temptation towards the "Dark Side" can also be represented by a simple moral dilemma. So Luke Skywalker learns of the Dark Side and its power, and Harry Potter is shown the dark side of wizarding society in the figures of the muggle-hating Malfoys and Death Eaters.

4. ATONEMENT WITH THE FATHER. Eventually, the hero comes to reconcile the warring aspects of himself that have come to light following his temptation to a false path. This often comes in the form of a father figure that represents the opposing aspect of the hero's self. So Luke Skywalker recognizes that his father is a good man at heart and begins to attempt to bring him back to the Light Side of the Force, and Neo recognizes that his mentor Morpheus' belief that he is The One is right.

5. APOTHEOSIS. The hero's ego is destroyed, leading to an expansion of consciousness. Often the hero's idea of reality is changed, and he may gain new abilities, causing him to sacrifice himself for the greater good. At this point the hero becomes godlike, usually fulfilling a prophecy. When Neo is killed by Agent Smith, he realizes that death is an illusion.

6. THE ULTIMATE BOON. The hero is given the reward of his adventure—that which he set out to achieve. It may be the princess' hand in marriage, fame, power, spiritual wisdom, or the philosopher's stone. This reward can be taken back to the world he came from and used for its benefit. So Harry Potter destroys a part of Voldemort's soul and saves the school and his friends.

Return

- 1. REFUSAL OF THE RETURN.** Now the hero is called back to the real world, but has found bliss or completion in this new world. He does not want to return. Harry Potter does not want to return to the muggle world of Privet Drive, and longs to stay in Hogwarts.
- 2. THE MAGIC FLIGHT.** With this refusal comes opposition, and a chase or journey to return the hero back to the world may ensue. The Hogwarts Express shuttles Harry and his friends back home, the Millennium falcon destroys the TIE fighters chasing Luke when trying to destroy the Death Star, and Frodo Baggins and Samwise Gamgee are rescued by Gandalf 's eagles.
- 3. RESCUE FROM WITHOUT.** Closely linked to the Magic Flight, the hero may need to be rescued by a force from his old world.
- 4. THE CROSSING OF THE RETURN THRESHOLD.** The hero must now go back through the threshold he came from, learning to accept his old reality as real and normal once more. Thus, the four hobbits that helped destroy the One Ring, and who have seen so much of the world, return to the Shire and help deliver it from its new evil overlords.
- 5. MASTER OF THE TWO WORLDS.** Having gained so much experience and the Ultimate Boon, the hero may now perceive and live in both the mundane and magical world. He may also bring his new understanding into his everyday life.
- 6. FREEDOM TO LIVE.** The hero is finally able to bestow the Ultimate Boon that he sacrificed so much for upon his fellow man. This often appears in a form of free dom for others—freedom from Darth Vader and the Empire, freedom from the rule of Sauron, and freedom from Voldemort and oppression.