



The Hero's Journey

What I think is that a good life is one hero journey after another. Over and over again, you are called to the realm of adventure; you are called to new horizons. Each time, there is the same problem: do I dare? And then if you do dare, the dangers are there, and the help also, and the fulfillment or the fiasco. There's always the possibility of fiasco.

But there's also the possibility of bliss.

- Joseph Campbell

The Hero's Journey is not just a mythical pattern in old texts and ancient stories. The Hero's Journey is a useful guide to life and to how you can write your stories to totally transform not just the reader, but yourself.

Have you ever known someone who always tells great stories? Sometimes we think people with great stories live a life of magical adventure because of how the story is told. The truth is that many people who tell great stories live ordinary lives but can make any day of their life compelling and evocative. It's not the event that is so amazing: traveling to another country, biking across town, ending or beginning a relationship - it's the way the story is told. It's how the storyteller conveys the events and how much of it is not only about her, but how she reaches into the listener's world and describes universal truths that anyone can relate to. It's about making sense of the world in a way that celebrates the art of storytelling.

Every story has a primary emotional purpose. When you move beyond just writing about events, you learn more about yourself. You discover what you were really thinking and feeling during the events, what you were worried about, and what emotions motivated you. Writing a true story is about how you feel about the events you're describing and what you are learning from these events. So think



about how you felt when your story actually happened. What was motivating you?
NOTE: Please replace the word protagonist/ character for the word “you” if you are creating fiction based on true events. I use “you” when describing the hero’s journey because I want to encourage people to write about their own personal truths.

What troubled you? How did you feel about your surroundings and the people around you? How do you feel *now* about what happened then? You want to create a connection with your readers and then consistently return to your experience of what is happening in the narrative. The more emotion and feelings you can communicate in your story, the better. This doesn’t always have to be complicated, deep or complex. In fact, taking a second to say something as simple as, “It was unbelievable!” or, “For a second I was shocked,” gives your story the emotional charge it needs to connect. You simply have to share yourself authentically with the audience.

The best stories have two elements: the element of feeling familiar and the element of surprise. When you combine these two elements, every reader wants more.

How to use the Hero’s Journey as a guide for your story.

Treasure, love, reward, approval, honor, status, freedom, and survival... these are some of the many things we associate with the Hero’s Journey. In modern true stories we don’t slay dragons or save princesses—these are colorful metaphors and symbols. In your Hero’s Journey you may confront inner demons, divorce, financial ruin, heartbreak, sickness or psychological struggles. You will also grow strong from facing these trials and tribulations and be able to tell a tale of great bravery, transformation, self-love, health miracles, finding your soulmate, or



traveling to distant lands that you never thought you would ever see. At the end of each journey you're different—sometimes visually, but always internally. The Hero's Journey in a true story is a process of personal transformation- a roadmap for self-development.

There is a strange phenomenon about telling a true story, especially stories about overcoming hardship and adversity. We are wired to recognize something familiar about these stories. If you study the best stories ever told or ever written, you will notice the stories follow the formula of the Hero's Journey. According to folklorists and other narrative scholars, the Hero's Journey forms the basic template for all great stories. Described at length in Joseph Campbell's book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, the Hero's Journey serves as the tale everyone tells.

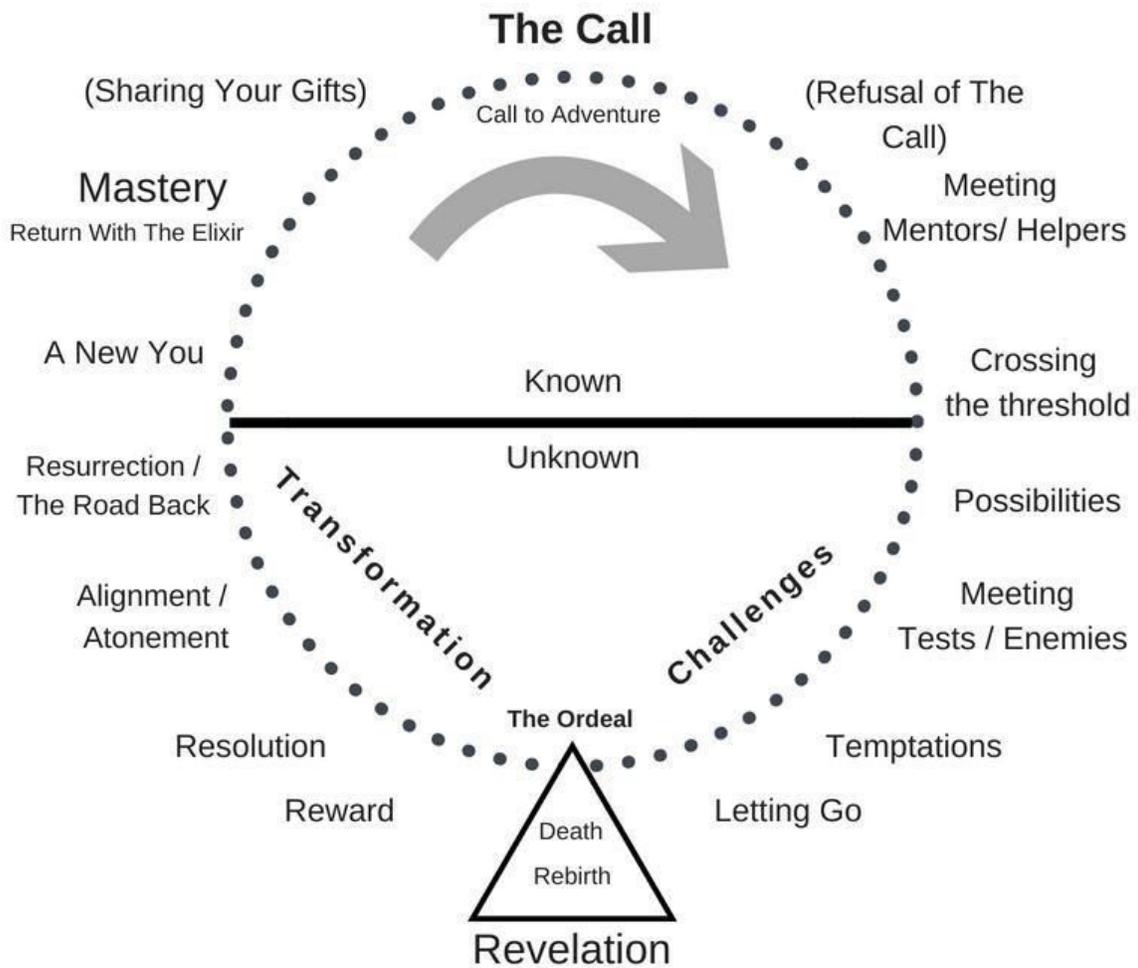
We are given callings throughout our life. Each significant event or journey can be broken down according to the Hero's Journey. Remember you're not just writing events, you're writing about all the aspects, phases and emotional triggers about your journey. The greatest part about using the Hero's Journey formula (even loosely) to write your memoir or true story is that you get to see how things lined up for you. You get to witness God, or the Universe, or whatever you call it. Call it Harry, I don't care, but the best part about writing with the Hero's Journey in mind is that as you see and witness your own transformation you transform the reader.

The Hero's Journey has served storytellers and listeners since the very first stories were ever told. The modern era shows no sign of it wearing out and it's becoming more relevant now that we are connected globally. I hope you enjoy these keys to using the Hero's Journey to outline your stories. Here is my short guide to help you map your story to the Hero's Journey.





The Hero's Journey





The Hero's Journey Broken Down into Each Section

I use second person “you” as the protagonist. If you are writing fiction, simply replace “you” with the protagonist.

NOTE: In a book the climax usually comes towards the end of the book and not in the center, there is often a) A Dark Night of The Soul and b) another false defeat where “All Hope is Lost”. We will discuss that in the next tutorial. This guide gives you an understanding of the basic formula of the hero's journey.

The Call (The Call to Adventure): In true stories ‘the call’ can be a variety of things. It can be an offer for a new job, getting fired, reaching a breaking point with physical or psychological abuse, getting married, getting divorced or any number of shifts in a person’s life. I sometimes name this “the call to change”. Basically, it’s when you receive some kind of information (internally or externally) that creates a shift for you to look at your life differently and question your life as you know it. You may choose willingly, or you may be dragged into it unwillingly. This is when you are being asked to leave the “known” world that you are accustomed to and head out into the unknown world to begin the journey of learning what this calling is all about.

Refusal of the Call: Sometimes when a call is given, you might refuse to heed it. This may be due to a sense of obligation, fear, insecurity, a sense of inadequacy or any of a range of reasons that work to hold you back in the circumstances you are in. The refusal of the call might have you stay in limbo for a long time, sometimes for life. Refusal of the call usually results in all sorts of confusing things happening around you. You might feel extremely stuck in your life in many facets. Once you get the call to adventure it’s best to take it or the rest of your life will feel like an uphill battle.



Meeting the Mentor/s: As soon as you accept the call to adventure (or the call to change), life starts to shift quickly, and synchronicities begin! It is at this time you likely meet your mentors. The definition of mentor can be all sorts of things: a person, an old friend, a new friend, a stranger, or it can even be a book, an animal or a spiritual guide, or an object such as a map. Mentors help you gain confidence, insight, advice, training, or magical gifts to overcome the initial fears and face the threshold of the adventure. You may not wish to rush into the unknown world blindly and, therefore, seek the experience and wisdom of someone who has been there before. Remember that once you have committed to your quest, consciously or unconsciously, all sorts of helpers and mentors appear. Things start to line up and you're guided.

Crossing the Threshold: Crossing the threshold signifies that you have finally committed to the journey. You are prepared to cross the gateway that separates the known world from the unknown world. The crossing is usually not easy and requires you to finally accept one of your biggest fears or get a swift kick in the rear from a mentor. At this point, you must confront an event that forces you to commit to entering the unknown world, from which there is no turning back. This is the point where you know you are invested in a big life change and are willing to risk leaving your old world behind and leap into a new life of venturing into a perceived and possible dangerous realm where the rules and limits are unknown.

Tests, Allies, Enemies: Having crossed the threshold, you begin to face tests, encounter allies, and confront your fears. Whether entering the new world through travel, starting a new career, or the emotional realm of romantic love, the test stage is your first look at the new unknown world and how its conditions and inhabitants' contrast with the former/known/ old world. You need to find out who can be



trusted. Allies are earned, a sidekick or new friend may join up, or an entire team forged. Enemies and villains are encountered. A rival may sneak into the picture. It is at this point you want to prepare yourself for the temptations to turn back or go off track. This might be where your new skills and powers are tested, or where you need to seek further training from a mentor. This is still part of the initiation to see if you are truly committed to this new path.

Letting Go: Finally, a total letting go happens. This is when you know you can never go back to your old life, or the way things were. At this stage you may finally feel a sense of relief because you have made the solid decision to never return to the way life used to be. It can now be a time to take a break before the big shift. You might share a laugh with a new friend, take a few days off and replenish your energy to face the big shift that is about to happen. The irony is that as soon as you make a firm decision to stay on your journey, you face one big fat test that rocks your life in a way you did not expect.

REVELATION - Death/ Rebirth/The Ordeal: Some people call this part “the dark night of the soul”, where all hope is lost. The ordeal, the central crisis, is where you face your greatest fear, confront the most difficult challenge, and experience a “death”. The death can be literal (a friend, relative, pet) or, more likely, figurative. This is where your journey teeters on the brink of failure. A part of the hero dies so that a new hero can be born. Fear dies to make way for courage. Ignorance dies for the birth of enlightenment. Dependency and irresponsibility die so that independence and empowerment can grow. The ordeal is the central, essential, and transformative stage of the journey. Only through “death” can there be rebirth, experiencing a resurrection that grants greater power and insight to see your journey to the end. You may directly taste death or witness the death of an ally or



mentor. Death can mean the break-up of the relationship or friendship. During this ordeal you also might question your sanity, might think the whole journey was a waste of time and experience a feeling that all hope is lost. However, it is during this extreme feeling of loss that magic happens. Much like a caterpillar goes through a painful “death” and transformation to become a butterfly, this part of the journey can be the most painful part to cross.

Reward/ Resolution: You have survived the dark night of the soul and have overcome the greatest fear of this journey and have weathered the crisis of the heart. You have earned the reward you sought. Your reward could come in many forms: greater knowledge or insight, reconciliation with a lover, a new job, leaving an abusive situation, traveling or getting a divorce and feeling better about your life. Whatever the treasure, you have earned the right to celebrate. Celebration not only allows you to replenish your energy, but also gives the audience a moment to catch their breath before the journey resumes to its climax and final transformation. The readers want to see you transform and cheers you on.

Alignment / Atonement: At this point you become "at one" with your new self and aligned with who you really are deep inside. You have absorbed the changes caused by the journey and a new you has emerged. You must finally recommit to completing the journey and accept the road back to your original world. Your success in the new world may make it difficult to return to your former realm, but you return a newly transformed person!

The Road Back / Resurrection: When you’ve finally absorbed and celebrated the rewards of your journey and feel the magic of being in alignment with your higher self, it’s time to face one more scary turn, and that’s the road back to the known world as a transformed person. This part is tricky and shows another challenge, the



final purge of your old self, a complete death of the old you. It's a climax where you are truly changed for the better and the real you has shed all old patterns and habits and you have allowed your wings to open and fly. It's a turning point where you are going to cross the threshold again and be resurrected as a new person, having gone through the unknown world and being willing to enter back into the known world.

A New You: This is the stage where you return to the previously known world as the new you and implement all the new lessons you've learned, but most of all to share these lessons and all you've learned so that you may be of service to others. You return to everyday life at a higher spiritual level with the gifts gained along the way through your journey.

Mastery / Return with Elixir / Sharing Your Gifts: This is the final stage of your journey. You've gone through a cycle of your life and you've conquered your fears. You are qualified to tell your story to the world and share your inner and outer gifts. You look forward to the start of a new life. Your return may bring fresh hope to those you left behind. You might bring with you a new solution to a problem, or perhaps a new perspective for everyone to consider. You've finally reached the stage of completing this cycle of this particular journey. It may be literal or metaphoric. It could be a cause for celebration, self-realization, or an end to strife, but, whatever it is, it represents three things: change, success, and proof of the journey traveled. Your doubters will be ostracized, your enemies stymied, and your allies rewarded. Ultimately, you return to where you started, but things will clearly never be the same again.

When you return as the hero of your own story, you inspire people so they can be brave enough to face their own call to adventure and become their own personal hero.