

# The Hero's Journey Archetype

(summary adapted from *Wikipedia*)

## Introduction

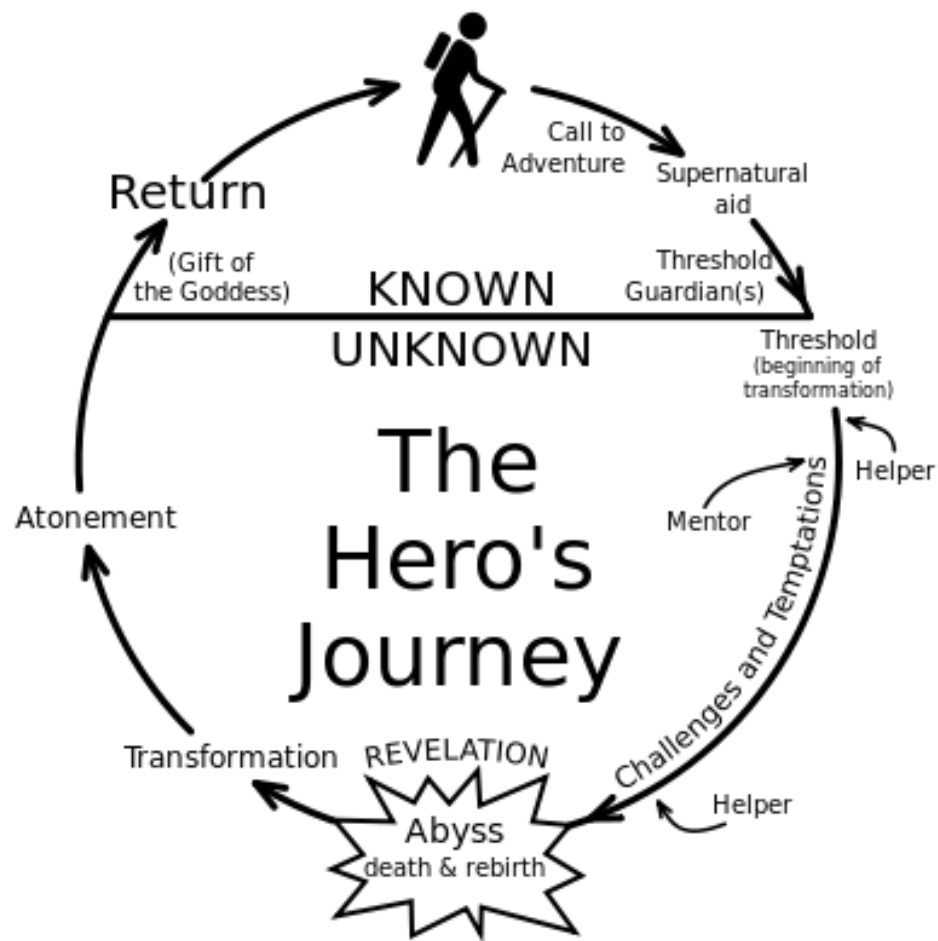
In his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), Joseph Campbell explores the theory that important myths from around the world (ancient myths that have survived for thousands of years) all share a fundamental structure, which people nowadays often call the **hero's journey**, but which Campbell preferred to call the **monomyth**. In a well-known statement from the introduction to his book, Campbell summarized the *monomyth/hero's journey* as follows:

“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.”

## Stages in the Journey

In laying out the monomyth, Campbell describes a number of stages or steps along this journey.

1. The hero starts in the *ordinary world*, and receives a call to enter an unusual world of strange powers and events (a *call to adventure*).
2. If the hero *accepts* the call to enter this strange world, the hero must face tasks and trials (a *road of trials*); the hero may have to face these trials *alone*, or the hero may have *assistance*.
3. At its most intense, the hero must survive a severe challenge, often with help *earned* along the journey.
4. If the hero *survives*, the hero may achieve a great gift (the *goal* or "*boon*"), which often results in the discovery of *important self-knowledge*.
5. The hero must then decide whether to return with this boon (the *return to the ordinary world*), often facing *challenges* on the return journey.
6. If the hero is successful in returning, the *boon or gift* may be used to improve the world (the *application of the boon*).



Note: **Very few myths contain all of these stages**—some myths contain many of the stages, while others contain only a few; some myths may have as a focus only one of the stages, while other myths may deal with the stages in a somewhat different order. These stages may be organized in a number of ways, including division into three sections: *Departure* (sometimes called *Separation*, *Initiation*, and *Return*. "Departure" deals with the hero venturing forth on the quest; "Initiation" deals with the hero's various adventures along the way; finally, "Return" deals with the hero's return home with knowledge and powers acquired on the journey.

### **Examples Ancient and Modern**

The classic examples of the monomyth relied upon by Campbell and other scholars include the stories of Osiris, Prometheus, the Buddha, Moses, and Jesus, although Campbell cites many other classic myths from many cultures that rely upon this basic structure.

Since its publication in 1949, Campbell's theory has been consciously applied by a wide variety of modern writers and artists. The best known is perhaps George Lucas, who has acknowledged Campbell's influence on the *Star Wars* films. This pattern of the hero's journey influences artists and intellectuals worldwide, suggesting a basic usefulness for Campbell's insights.