

Stages of the Hero's Journey

The Ordinary World

Most stories take the hero out of the ordinary, mundane world into a Special World, new and alien.

The Call to Adventure

The hero is presented with a problem, challenge, or adventure to undertake.

Once presented with a *call to adventure*, she can no longer remain indefinitely in the comfort of the *ordinary world*.

Refusal of the Call (The Reluctant Hero)

This one is about fear. The hero balks at the threshold of adventure.

Mentor (The Wise Old Man or Woman)

The relationship between hero and Mentor is one of the most common themes in mythology, one of the most symbolic. It stands for the bond between parent and child, teacher and student, doctor and patient, god and man.

Crossing the First Threshold

The hero finally commits to the adventure and fully enters the Special World of the story for the first time.

Tests, Allies and Enemies

The hero naturally encounters new challenges and *tests*, makes *allies and enemies*, and begins to learn the rules of the Special World.

Approach to the Inmost Cave

The hero comes at last to the edge of a dangerous place, sometimes deep underground, where the object of the quest is hidden.

The Supreme Ordeal

Here the fortunes of the hero hit bottom in a direct confrontation with his greatest fear. The hero, like Jonah, is "in the belly of the beast."

Reward (Seizing the Sword)

The hero now takes possession of the treasure she has come seeking, her *reward*.

Sometimes the "sword" is knowledge and experience that leads to greater understanding and reconciliation with hostile forces. The hero may also be reconciled with the opposite sex. In many stories the loved one is the treasure the hero has come to win or rescue.

The Road Back

This stage marks the decision to return to the Ordinary World.

Resurrection

Death and darkness get in one last, desperate shot before being finally defeated. It's a final exam for the hero, who must be tested once more to see if he has really learned the lessons of the Supreme Ordeal.

Return with the Elixir

The hero returns to the Ordinary World, but the journey is meaningless unless she brings back some Elixir, treasure, or lesson from the Special World. The Elixir is a magic potion with the power to heal.

Unless something is brought back from the ordeal in the Inmost Cave, the hero is doomed to repeat the adventure. Many comedies use this ending, as the foolish character refuses to learn his lesson and embarks on the same folly that got him in trouble in the first place.