

Joseph Campbell's Structure of the Heroic Journey

SEPARATION/DEPARTURE:

1. The Call to Adventure: This may be a simple blunder that brings the individual into contact with magic, mystery, or a crisis. Sometimes a herald, such as a frog, an old man or a deer, will call or lure the hero to adventure. There may be three or four calls to adventure, but they will always signify that destiny has summoned the hero.
2. Refusal of the Call: In some stories the hero ignores or refuses the call until some greater pressure urges him to action. In other stories the hero (or heroine) is prevented from answering the call by imprisonment or enchantment.
3. Supernatural Aid: For those who answer the call, the first encounter of the hero-journey is with a protective figure who provides the adventurer with an amulet or other aid. The protective figure is often an old man or woman, or it may be a virgin, a wizard, a hermit, etc. The hero may receive an object, wise advice, or a glimpse into the future, depending on the story.
4. Crossing the First Threshold: As the hero proceeds on his journey, he must enter a region which is outside of "civilization," mysterious, unfamiliar, and full of danger. There may be a watcher at the boundary to this area which the hero must trick, bribe, or conquer in order to pass.
5. The Belly of the Whale: The hero passes through a severe trial which often symbolizes rebirth. He may be swallowed by a whale, and elephant, or other monster, may visit the underworld, a tomb, a temple or cave. The place is beyond the confines of this physical world and by enduring it and surviving it the hero shows that he is selfless and, to some degree, superhuman.

THE STAGE OF TRIALS & VICTORIES OF INITIATION:

1. The Road of Trials: Here the hero must survive a succession of trials, tests, or ordeals. He is often aided by the supernatural helper he met earlier or by an amulet, spell or piece of advice received from that helper. The task often seems impossible.
2. The Meeting with the Goddess: This is the ultimate adventure, which takes place at the ends of the earth, the center of the universe, the tabernacle of the temple, or within the darkness of the deepest chamber of the heart. The goddess may be beautiful or horrible, but she represents the totality of what can be known, that which seems unattainable. It may be that a symbol, such as a ring, a well or a golden bowl, represent the goddess in the aspect of the myth. If the adventurer is a female, the goddess will be a god, and may take the form of an animal.
3. Temptation/The Woman as Temptress: One of the ways in which the hero is superior is that he can withstand the temptations, or weaknesses, of the flesh. By conquering, fooling, or ignoring the woman as temptress, the hero demonstrates this. The temptress may be a sorceress or a siren: she is not necessarily human.
4. Atonement with the Father: Here the hero meets the requirements of a powerful male god, king, or ogre. The father-figure may be good or evil.
5. Apotheosis: This is the full initiation into the superhuman life of an experience hero. Two things, usually representing male and female or good and evil, are joined together in, through, or by the hero. The hero or something he values is made whole

and transcends mere human existence through the experience.

6. Receiving the Ultimate Boon: Because the hero is superior, he receives a very valuable reward, often one that is more valuable spiritually than physically.

THE RETURN & REINTEGRATION WITH SOCIETY:

1. Refusal of the Return: Here the hero, who must return to the human world with his boon or trophy, may refuse the responsibility, temporarily, through doubt in his own ability, love of the realm of the gods, enchantment, etc.

2. The Magical Flight: If the hero has the permission of the gods to return, he has their aid, and the return is easy. If not, it is a chase or a difficult journey, in which magic plays an important role. The human aspect of the hero may be revealed here through error or weaknesses, and his strengths usually allow him to prevail.

3. Rescue from Without: The hero who is in trouble or is unwilling to return may be rescued by a god, a human, or an animal.

4. The Crossing of the Return Threshold: The realm of the gods is different from that of men. Once the hero returns, he may have difficulty communicating with humans, adjusting to changes, setting things right, or convincing people of the value of his quest.

5. Master of Two Worlds: The hero accepts the differences between the human and magical worlds and becomes godlike or very powerful.

6. Freedom to Live: The hero lives or enables others to live happily ever after.

Adapted from Joseph Campbell, Hero with a Thousand Faces (Cleveland: Meridian, 1956), 49-243

Heroic Pattern	Star Wars	The Matrix
I: Departure		
The call to adventure	Princess Leia's message	"Follow the white rabbit"

Refusal of the call	Must help with the harvest	Neo won't climb out window
Supernatural aid	Obi-wan rescues Luke from sandpeople	Trinity extracts the "bug" from Neo
Crossing the first threshold	Escaping Tatoonine	Agents capture Neo
The belly of the whale	Trash compactor	Torture room

II: Initiation

The road of trials	Lightsaber practice	Sparring with Morpheus
The meeting with the goddess	Princess Leia	Trinity
Temptation away from the true path ¹	Luke is tempted by the Dark Side	Cypher (the failed messiah) is tempted by the world of comfortable illusions
Atonement with the Father	Darth and Luke reconcile	Neo rescues and comes to agree (that he's The One) with his father-figure, Morpheus
Apotheosis (becoming god-like)	Luke becomes a Jedi	Neo becomes The One
The ultimate boon	Death Star destroyed	Humanity's salvation now within reach

III: Return

Refusal of the return	"Luke, come on!" Luke wants to stay to avenge Obi-Wan	Neo fights agent instead of running
The magic flight	Millennium Falcon	"Jacking in"
Rescue from without	Han saves Luke from Darth	Trinity saves Neo from agents
Crossing the return threshold	Millennium Falcon destroys pursuing TIE fighters	Neo fights agent Smith
Master of the two worlds	Victory ceremony	Neo's declares victory over machines in final phone call
Freedom to live	Rebellion is victorious over Empire	Humans are victorious over the machines