17 Steps of the Hero’s Journey

Here are all 17 steps of the hero’s journey, as outlined by Campbell:

DEPARTURE

1. The call to adventure:

Something, or someone, interrupts the hero's familiar life to present a problem, threat, or opportunity.

2. Refusal of the call:

Unwilling to step out of their comfort zone or face their fear, the hero initially hesitates to embark on this journey.

3. Supernatural aid:

A mentor figure gives the hero the tools and inspiration they need to accept the call to adventure.

4. Crossing the threshold:

The hero embarks on their quest.

5. Belly of the whale:

The hero crosses the point of no return, and encounters their first major obstacle.

INITIATION

6. The road of trials:

The hero must go through a series of tests or ordeals to begin his transformation. Often, the hero fails at least one of these tests.

7. The meeting with the goddess:

The hero meets one or more allies, who pick him up and help him continue his journey.

8. Woman as temptress:

The hero is tempted to abandon or stray from his quest. Traditionally, this temptation is a love interest, but it can manifest itself in other forms as well, including fame or wealth.

9. Atonement with the father:

The hero confronts the reason for his journey, facing his doubts and fears and the powers that rule his life. This is a major turning point in the story: every prior step has brought the hero here, and every step forward stems from this moment.

10. Apotheosis:

As a result of this confrontation, the hero gains a profound understanding of their purpose or skill. Armed with this new ability, the hero prepares for the most difficult part of the adventure.

11. The ultimate boon:

The hero achieves the goal he set out to accomplish, fulfilling the call that inspired his journey in the first place.

RETURN

12. Refusal of the return:

If the hero’s journey has been victorious, he may be reluctant to return to the ordinary world of his prior life.

13. The magic flight:

The hero must escape with the object of his quest, evading those who would reclaim it.

14. Rescue from without:

Mirroring the meeting with the goddess, the hero receives help from a guide or rescuer in order to make it home.

15. The crossing of the return threshold:

The hero makes a successful return to the ordinary world.

16. Master of two worlds:

We see the hero achieve a balance between who he was before his journey and who he is now. Often, this means balancing the material world with the spiritual enlightenment he’s gained.

17. Freedom to live:

We leave the hero at peace with his life.

Examples of the Hero's Journey In Film: Two Case Studies

Hollywood has embraced the monomyth in many different ways. These are two of the most popular films that explore the hero's journey, broken down into the main stages of the monomyth.

Star Wars (1977)

1. The ordinary world. Luke lives with his aunt and uncle on a farm on Tatooine. He likes to stare at the sunset and dream of "teleporting off this rock".
2. The call to adventure. R2-D2 plays Luke a message of distress from Princess Leia, who needs someone to transport the droid to Alderaan.
3. Refusal of the call. Luke isn't thrilled about leaving his home planet and getting in trouble from his uncle to go on a wild goose chase.
4. The mentor. Obi-Wan Kenobi convinces Luke to follow his heart by showing him his father's lightsaber.
5. Crossing the threshold. Luke and Obi-Wan leave Mos Eisley for Alderaan.
6. The ordeal. Leia's rescue from the Death Star, and later, Luke using the Force to destroy the Death Star.
7. The return. Luke joins the rebels and decides to become a Jedi.

The Matrix (1999)

1. The ordinary world. Thomas Anderson is a bored computer programmer by day and the hacker "Neo" by night.
2. The call to adventure. Neo receives a message promising him that everything is not as it seems. He is told to "follow the white rabbit".
3. Refusal of the call. Neo isn't sure if Trinity is telling him the truth. He allows himself to be captured.
4. Mentor. Morpheus gives Neo a choice: the blue pill if he wants to return to his old life, or the red pill, if he wants to know the truth.
5. Crossing the threshold. Neo chooses the red pill and is shown what the Matrix is.

6. The ordeal. Neo struggles to accept his new role but ultimately learns to become who he was meant to be, defeating Agent Smith inside the Matrix and saving Morpheus.
7. The return. Neo tells the machines he will defeat them and save humanity.

The Hero's Journey In Literature: Two Case Studies

Many authors have used the monomyth in literature and popular fiction. Let's explore the hero's journey in *Harry Potter* and *Lord of the Rings*, two famous epics:

J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954)

1. The ordinary world. Frodo lives in the Shire, enjoying a nice, peaceful life with his friends.
2. The call to adventure. Following Gandalf's discovery of the ring of power, he asks Frodo to undertake a journey and keep the ring with him.
3. Refusal of the call. Frodo is unsure of leaving the Shire, as he has no experience with the world outside.
4. The mentor. Gandalf convinces Frodo that he has a pure heart and he is the one who must "bear this burden".
5. Crossing the threshold. Frodo and Sam leave the Shire behind, a moment that Frodo has mixed feelings about.
6. The ordeal. Characterized by the many challenges Frodo faces along the way with the Fellowship, including the fight with the Balrog.
7. The return. Frodo realizes that he can no longer be part of the Fellowship and must continue on the journey alone. He sets out for Mount Doom.

J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (1997)

1. The ordinary world. Harry lives with his aunt and uncle, who make him sleep in the cupboard under the stairs.
2. The call to adventure. Harry receives a letter from Hogwarts, asking him to attend.
3. Refusal of the call. Harry is unsure of what is real and what isn't and has trouble accepting he is a real wizard. As far as he knows, his parents were killed in a car crash—and not by an evil wizard.

4. The mentor. In the first book, Hagrid serves as Harry's mentor, but later in the series, it's Albus Dumbledore who guides and advises Harry. Hagrid convinces Harry he is a wizard and takes him to Hogwarts.
5. Crossing the threshold. Harry crosses a literal barrier—platform 9 ¾ at Kings Cross station, leaving the normal world behind and crossing into the magical one.
6. The ordeal. Harry's many trials and tribulations during his first year at Hogwarts, culminating in his first meeting with—and the temporary defeat of—Voldemort at the end of the first book.
7. The return. Harry returns to his aunt and uncle's house for the summer, happy and safe in the knowledge that he has a new home at Hogwarts.