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The Hero’s Journey Across Time and Space

I read *Eragon* when I was eight years old and was convinced it was the most wonderful, innovative thing in the world. However, when I brought this up to my older brother, he did what older brothers do best and burst my bubble with six simple words: it’s just *Star Wars* with dragons. My mind imploded, my illusion shattered, my heart broke. I got over it shortly after by resolving to write my own dragon novel that was ten times better and most definitely not *Star Wars*. However, I wrote what I knew, which just so happened to be a steady stream of fantasy and science fiction, most of it following one brilliant trend: The Hero’s Journey. This paradigm is essentially impossible to avoid as it is so deeply seeped into today’s novels and films. However, as I grew older I was able to appreciate the monomyth and began to analyze its qualities along with how they related to the media I consumed. While it works its way across various mediums, it also isn’t the only story out there. Even if the pattern was the only way us humans were capable of telling a tale, the variety of stories that do use it and manage to stay their own entity prove that it is not all bad that we have a pattern worked into the creative system. It is a rather helpful tool for me as a writer, and it is important to know that the real creativity lies in the details and execution of a story.

One of the most important things about the Hero’s Journey is that it is not just a series of plot points that a hero needs to hit into to make their rank among the great heroes of the past. It is a study of character development, which is an important key to creating relatable, digestible, and invigorating characters. This is especially important with Young Adult Literature, as it is a great resource for adolescents to find and immerse themselves. The Hero’s Journey also acts a road map through stories. When a brain is trained to recognize patterns, it is able to connect them to things that it already understands. Understanding the monomyth in easily digestible understood stories is like a gateway to analyzing and recognizing patterns in more complex works such as Beowulf and the Odyssey. While the Hero’s Journey isn’t strictly limited to the fantasy genre, it is where it lives the most, especially since the trend was first discovered through the old fantasy stories called myths, which makes fantasy and science fiction the best outlets for introducing the monomyth.

Adams, Richard. *Watership Down*. , 1975. Print.

Watership Down is the story of rabbits who decide to leave their home when Fiver, a rabbit who has visions of dangers, sees that their homes will be developed on. His older brother Hazel is then set to find a new home, encountering birds of prey, traps, dogs and shady rabbit warrens.

Watership Down is a great companion piece to the Odyssey, and like other works in this bibliography follows the monomyth. While easy to dismiss a story about rabbits, there are many layers to Watership Down such as a rabbit religious systems, languages, and full societies. It is a beautifully imaginative piece of fantasy literature that trades traditional notions of magic and dragons with industrial forces and the perils of nature.

Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1972. Print.

In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* Joseph Campbell compares myths across cultures to find an essential human truth within stories. His conclusion is that within all ancient cultures there is a spiritual world that runs parallel to the spirit world and myths are the story of heroes crossing that threshold into the spiritual to learn and gain strength that they return to the physical world, this is what he terms The Hero’s Journey. There are 12 basic stages within this monomyth: Ordinary World; Call to Adventure; Refusal of the Call; Meeting The Mentor; Crossing The Threshold; Tests, Allies, Enemies; Approach To The Inmost Cave; Ordeal; Reward (Seizing The Sword); The Road Back; Resurrection; and Return With The Elixir.

The principles laid out in Joseph Campbell’s novel are the centerpiece of this annotated bibliography. His discoveries changed the way a generation viewed storytelling, greatly influencing filmmakers, novelists, and artists. Through the Hero’s Journey teachers can help students analyze ancient myths, understand cultures, and connect to modern fantasy.

Card, Orson S. *Ender's Game*. New York: Tor, 1994. Print

Ender is the third child in an overpopulated world where families need special government permission in order to have more than one child. The reason for his existence: to join the intergalactic military force and prepare for war with an alien threat that once nearly destroyed humanity. With his genius level intelligence and capacity for empathy, Ender must fit in at Battle School to prepare for real military combat and lead his friends to victory over both peers and a little known alien threat.

*Ender’s Game* is a brilliant fantasy novel with many layers as it tells both Ender’s story and that of his sister Valentine back on earth. It also follows the monomyth formula, Ender leaving home for outer space, making allies, and facing trials in several different games presented to test his will from which he managed to emerge a hero.

Lucas, George, Gary Kurtz, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Mark Hamill, James E. Jones, Alec Guinness, Peter Cushing, Anthony Daniels, Kenny Baker, David Prowse, John Williams, Gilbert Taylor, Paul Hirsch, Marcia Lucas, and Richard Chew. *Star Wars: Episode IV*. , 2004

*Star Wars: A New Hope* is the story of Luke Skywalker, a young orphan boy from the planet of Tatooine who dreams of leaving to join the ranks of Imperial Star Pilots. However, those dreams are short lived when he receives a message from the Princess Leia, who has been captured by the Imperial Army and must team up with the mysterious Jedi Knight Obi-Wan Kenobi. On his adventure, Luke learns of the Force, a universal power that Jedi’s can harness, and that he must master it to save Leia and defeat the evil Sith Lord, Darth Vader.

George Lucas wholeheartedly embraced Joseph’s Campbell's Hero’s Journey, giving the formula much credit to the success of the *Star Wars Franchise*. Star Wars is also a beloved sci-fi fantasy adventure that has rooted its way into popular culture, therefore a great tool for exposing teens to the monomyth.

"Minos." Encyclopedia Mythica. 2016. Encyclopedia Mythica Online. 05 Dec. 2016

<<http://www.pantheon.org/articles/m/minos.html>>.

In order to prove his right to be king of Crete, King Minos asks the Greek God of the Sea, Poseidon, to send him an offering to prove his right to rule. Poseidon sends Minos a bull, but Minos is entranced by his beauty and refuses to sacrifice him back. This refusal angers Poseidon, who in revenge makes Minos’s wife lust after the bull and produces a Minotaur, which in turn leads to other parts of Greek Mythology.

This story is an example of the Refusal to the Call in the Hero’s Journey. It is easy to assume that all Heroes must answer the call, because if they do not then there is no story. However, Minos shows that refusals are met with their own consequences and produce other stories all together.

Ozaki, Yei Theodora. "The Story of Prince Yamato Take." *Japanese Fairy Tales*. Lit2Go Edition. 1908. Web. <http://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/72/japanese-fairy-tales/4852/the-story-of

prince-yamato-take/>. December 05, 2016

Yamato is an old Japanese myth about a young man, Yamato Takeru, who faces three trials. One: to defeat the leader of a rival clan who has defied his emperor father; two: to travel lands enforcing his father’s rule where in one such land he must defeat a deceitful king; and three: where he travels to a mountain and defeat a deity, but is tricked and defeated.

Yamato follows Joseph Campbell’s monomyth and also resembles the Anglo Saxon story of Beowulf. Both warriors are young when they begin their journeys, rise to power, and fall at the mercy of a great foe to die heroes. Despite the fact that these stories developed continents away, their similarities in narrative pattern reinforce the monomyth.

Paolini, Christopher. *Eragon*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003. Print.

In the kingdom of Alagaësia dragons once roamed the earth and sky, but were wiped out in a great war which put the evil King Galbatorix in power. Galbatorix is the last of the Dragon Riders, which is until Eragon, a fifteen year old orphan who lives with his uncle and cousin in the simple town of Carvahall, discovers a dragon egg. The egg hatches for Eragon and he is thrust into an adventure to save the life of himself and his dragon, Saphira, from Galbatorix’s clutches by joining the rebellion to defeat him.

Eragon very closely resembles Campbell’s Hero’s Journey, but I selected this book in particular because it shares many similarities with the original *Star Wars* *Trilogy* which is also on this bibliography. It is filled with heart, adventure, and a great fantasy read for young adults to compare with older myths. While Eragon is not transported into a different or spiritual world, he is taken to be a part of a greater and magical bit of his own world.

Roth, Veronica, and Veronica Roth. Divergent. , 2011. Print.

Beatrice “Tris” Prior lives in a world where people are divided up by their personalities and while they can be born in one faction, are allowed to choose their own at sixteen. Feeling out of place in her home faction Abnegation, she abandons her family for a life with the aggressive militant faction, Dauntless where she learns that she is a Divergent, someone who has traits of multiple factions. Knowing that she is different, she must work to hide this quality of herself and blend into life with the Dauntless so she is not cast out with the factionless.

Unlike the rest of the stories on this list, Tris is female which shows that the monomyth applies outside of classically built roles. Today more and more stories are following the formula by changing the details. Tris’s story also follows the Heroine’s Journey which is a great internal struggle of internal and external dualities.

Sutcliff, Rosemary. *Beowulf*. New York: Dutton, 1962. Print

When King Hrothgar builds a brilliant mead hall named Heorot for his warriors to eat, drink, and be merry, they upset a demon named Grendel who retaliates with relentless attacks. Beowulf hears of this and defeats Grendel, after which he must also kill his angered mother — a battle which earns him much wealth and fame. After returning to his kingdom and ruling for fifty years a dragon threatens his land and Beowulf rises to the challenge of defeating him and dies a hero.

I selected Beowulf because it is one of the myths within the canon that I am familiar with. This too follows the hero’s journey and has classic fantasy elements such as the demon Grendel, his sea witch mother, and the gold loving dragon. It also brings the elements of the physical world into perspective by showcasing Anglo Saxon culture.