

# FEMALE PROTAGONISTS & THE FEMALE HERO'S JOURNEY

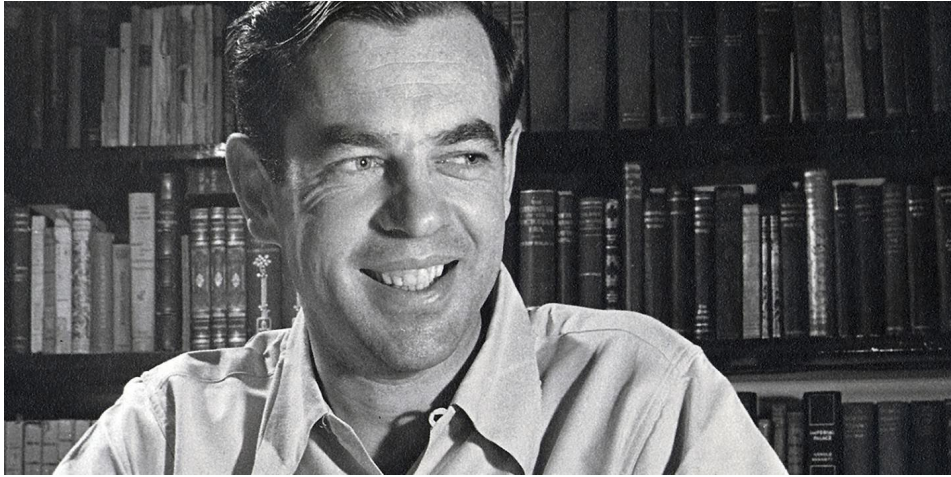
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# WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

- “Characters who reflect experiences of teen readers, something that is not found in much of the literary canon, especially when it comes to strong female protagonists” (Donelson)
- Young girls need female characters that accurately depict what it means to be a woman
- Students need to understand the importance of inclusion and understanding
- A deeper understanding of female roles through social and cultural development
- How female protagonists have increased and developed, but still need improvement



# WHY JOSEPH CAMPBELL'S HERO'S JOURNEY DOES NOT FIT THE FEMALE HERO'S JOURNEY

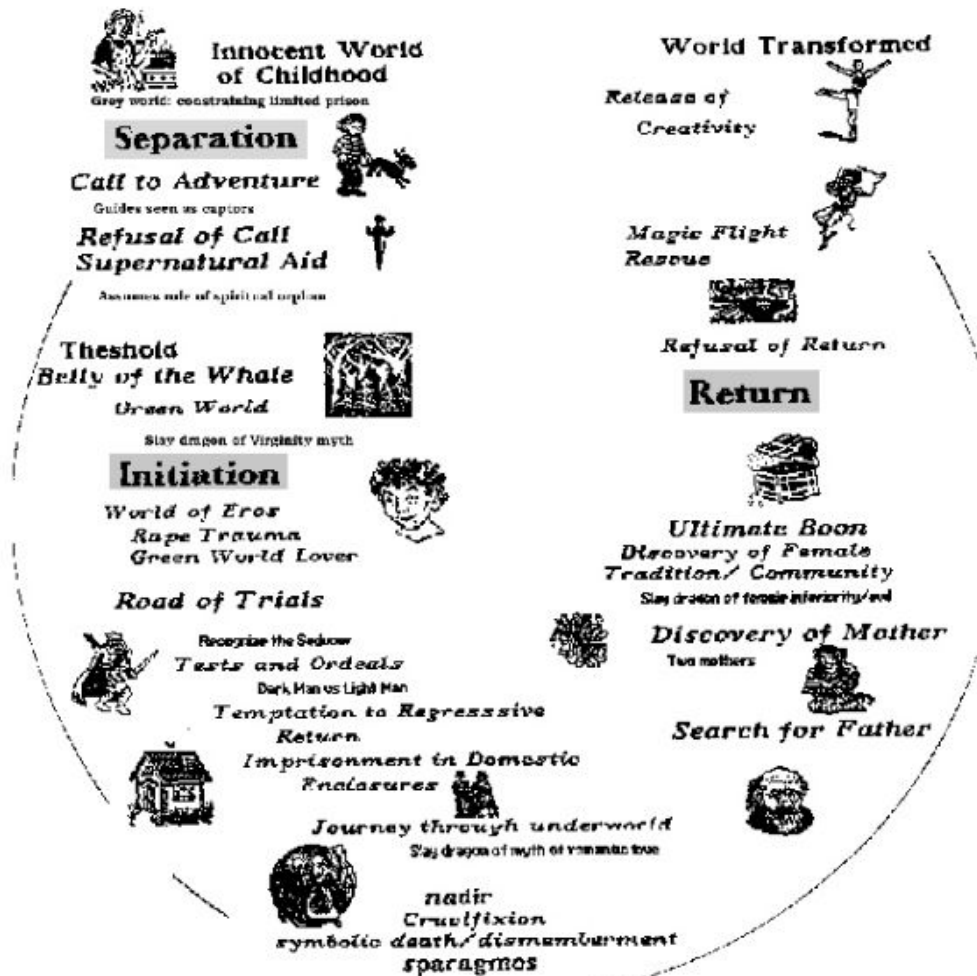


- Campbell's arc follows that of ancient texts (ie. Iliad, Odyssey, etc.)
- Historical reference is not accurate to today's vastly changed perception of female roles
- Different choices and values compared to male heroes

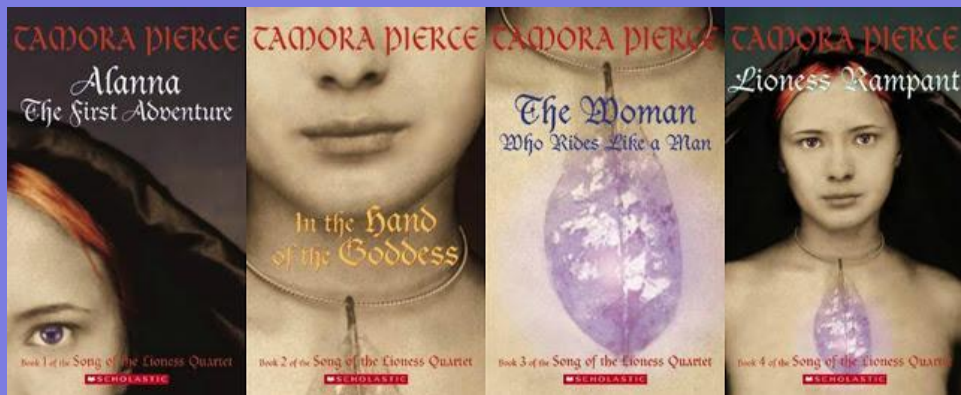
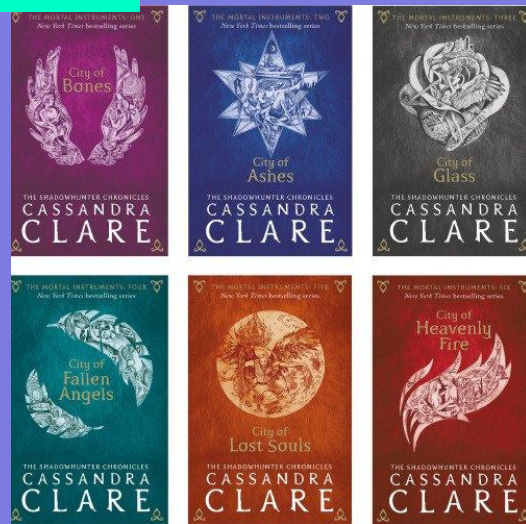
<http://fangirlblog.com/2012/04/the-heroines-journey-how-campbells-model-doesnt-fit/>

## THE HEROINE'S JOURNEY

- **Fortunate Fall: Domestic imprisonment and a release from it**
- **Choice between a light or dark man**
- **Discovers A Mother**
- **Apotheosis: discovers female tradition or rejects female inferiority**
- **Crossing Return threshold: meets parents**

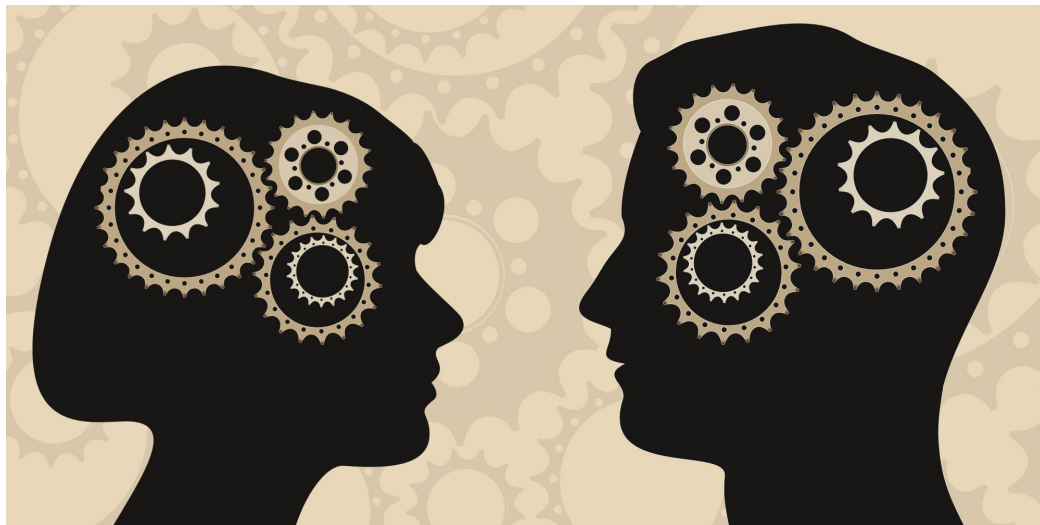


# SUGGESTED FEMALE HEROINE NOVELS



# “DO READERS JUDGE FEMALE CHARACTERS MORE HARSHLY THAN MALE CHARACTERS?”

- Illustration: John vs. Joan
- Do we want to be friends with characters? Not always.
- “There are few pleasures in fiction that expand our consciousness further than getting to observe the world from the perspective of characters so different from us, so thoroughly flawed, that if we were to encounter them in real life we wouldn't like them very much” - St. John Mandel
- Women are perceived and evaluated on different criteria
- We use fiction to learn empathy in our actual interactions



<http://www.theatlantic.com/sexes/archive/2013/05/do-readers-judge-female-character-s-more-harshly-than-male-characters/275599/>



# REPRESENTATION OF GIRLS IN YA DYSTOPIA

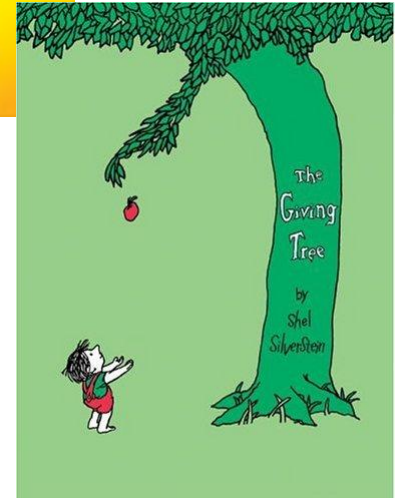
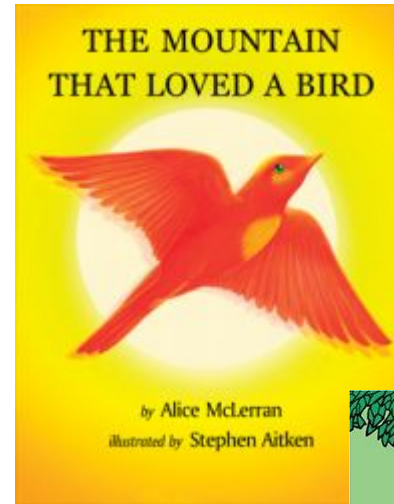


- Female portrayal on book covers
  - Conform to idealized standards of beauty
  - Emphasize her desirability to a male
- Summary descriptions depict female protagonists as dependent on males
  - “A boy with a secret of his own offers Jin the only she has...” (*The Walled City*)
  - “All that changes when she encounters a beautiful boy... with a secretive past” (*After the Red Rain*)
  - “he promised to keep them both safe” (*The Program*)

# CHILDREN'S LITERATURE → YA LITERATURE

- Male authors perspective on a female character different from that of a female character
- *The Giving Tree & The Mountain That Loved A Bird*
  - Caregiver and nurturer
- Ristau's study
  - 20% feminist perspective in parental roles
  - 72% caregiver roles
  - 56% female solving problems on her own
  - 44% female solving problems with the help of a male

<http://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/3>





# OTHER NOVELS TO CONSIDER

