

THE HERO'S JOURNEY or WHAT MAKES A GREAT STORY

There are many ways to look at The Hero's Journey, or what makes a great story.

Glove and Boots on YouTube (The Hero's Journey) does a great job to make this simple to understand.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZxs_jGN7Pg

Here is a summary of the characters in a great story.

- 1) Hero=good guy=average person who gains wisdom and power to solve their personal problems and often a greater problem (e.g. Luke Skywalker in Star Wars & Frodo in Lord of the Rings (LOTR)).
- 2) Herald=person or event that starts average person on their journey. (e.g. letters to Harry Potter, Gandalf visits Frodo)
- 3) Mentor=wise presence that guides the hero and gives advice. (e.g. Gandalf in Lord of the Rings, Obi-Wan Kenobi in Star Wars)
- 4) Threshold Guardians=henchman of evil guy, try to stop hero on his quest (Empire soldiers in Star Wars; Ringwraiths or Black Riders in LOTR)
- 5) Trickster=create mischief, comic relief, sometimes sidekick of hero (Merry and Pippin in LOTR)
- 6) Shapeshifter=good guy that turns bad, or vice versa. (e.g. Snape in Harry Potter; Jack Sparrow in Pirates of the Caribbean)
- 7) Shadow=main villain, bad guy, or obstacle to overcome. (Darth Vader in Star Wars, Lord Voldemort in Harry Potter, Sauron in LOTR)

Another look at story structure is Joseph Campbell's 12 stages of the story, summarized by Christopher Vogler

(http://www.thewritersjourney.com/hero%27s_journey.htm)

1. **THE ORDINARY WORLD.** The hero, uneasy, uncomfortable or unaware, is introduced sympathetically so the audience can identify with the situation or dilemma. The hero is shown against a background of environment, heredity, and personal history. Some kind of polarity in the hero's life is pulling in different directions and causing stress.
2. **THE CALL TO ADVENTURE.** Something shakes up the situation, either from external pressures or from something rising up from deep within, so the hero must face the beginnings of change.
3. **REFUSAL OF THE CALL.** The hero feels the fear of the unknown and tries to turn away from the adventure, however briefly. Alternately, another character may express the uncertainty and danger ahead.
4. **MEETING WITH THE MENTOR.** The hero comes across a seasoned traveler of the worlds who gives him or her training, equipment, or advice that will help on the journey. Or the hero reaches within to a source of courage and wisdom.
5. **CROSSING THE THRESHOLD.** At the end of Act One, the hero commits to leaving the Ordinary World and entering a new region or condition with unfamiliar rules and values.
6. **TESTS, ALLIES AND ENEMIES.** The hero is tested and sorts out allegiances in the Special World.
7. **APPROACH.** The hero and newfound allies prepare for the major challenge in the Special world.
8. **THE ORDEAL.** Near the middle of the story, the hero enters a central space in the Special World and confronts death or faces his or her greatest fear. Out of the moment of death comes a new life.
9. **THE REWARD.** The hero takes possession of the treasure won by facing death. There may be celebration, but there is also danger of losing the treasure again.
10. **THE ROAD BACK.** About three-fourths of the way through the story, the hero is driven to complete the adventure, leaving the Special World to be sure the treasure is brought home. Often a chase scene signals the urgency and danger of the mission.
11. **THE RESURRECTION.** At the climax, the hero is severely tested once more on the threshold of home. He or she is purified by a last sacrifice, another moment of death and rebirth, but on a higher and more complete level. By the hero's action, the polarities that were in conflict at the beginning are finally resolved.
12. **RETURN WITH THE ELIXIR.** The hero returns home or continues the journey, bearing some element of the treasure that has the power to transform the world as the hero has been transformed.