

# Reconfiguring the Hero's Journey

The Monomyth in Contemporary Popular Culture

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines key stages of the Hero's Journey, or Monomyth, as set out by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) and finds that the pattern retains its pertinence and relevance in contemporary texts and media. This is accomplished through a close reading of selected contemporary texts which engage with the pattern. In doing this, the project appraises the ways in which the pattern and the chosen texts inform each other, as well as examining its continued usefulness as a critical tool, the better to shed new light on the Monomyth itself.

The thesis is structured in the same way as the Hero's Journey itself, beginning with the "Call to Adventure" and ending with the "Master of the Two Worlds." These close examinations, each presented in a stand-alone article, serve as arguments for the pattern's continued validity as a tool for understanding story. The narratives with which it engages represent a number of different genres and media, including Young Adult literature, action cinema, superhero comics and autobiographical graphic novels. Through these readings it is shown that the Monomyth still informs, and is informed by, these texts.

These readings work toward a new way of looking at the pattern: as a representation of the liminal space between the two established modes of existence of a story's protagonist. Representing all that happens between the time the hero leaves the mundane world in which he has lived, and the time he returns to it transformed, the Hero's Journey is found to represent a productive liminality that allows the hero to transition from one stage of life to the next. Revisiting the pattern using contemporary texts and media helps to bring to light its continued usefulness as a critical framework from which to assess the heroic narratives of today.

