

English 4 Honors Heroes in Literature Summer Assignment

Required Texts: PDF(links below), film of choice, and *The Dark Knight Returns* by Frank Miller

Part I:

Joseph Campbell's *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* Recognizing the Hero's Journey in Modern Film

Monomyth:

Twentieth-century mythologist, professor of literature, and author, Joseph Campbell recognized an underlying storyline structure common to all hero stories. He called this universal story structure the monomyth. The monomyth of the hero applies to classical hero mythology, but it can be applied to modern stories as well.

Campbell organizes the hero's journey into three main stages, **Departure**, **Initiation**, and **Return**. Within these three categories, Campbell identifies specific steps or stages the hero will encounter. As we trace the hero's journey throughout our course, we will return to Campbell's structure.

Please read about the 17 stages of a hero's journey using the link below, or copying and pasting the pdf address into your browser.

Keep the stages handy (you may want to print them out).

Then populate the organizer that follows, based on your understanding of Campbell's 17 stages of the monomyth as they apply to a movie of your choice. See Instructions on the next page.

Campbell's stages:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PzWsuSfvff37m07tXcbEunAdS3Ji4_BolQpOJmkV_oY/edit?usp=sharing

<file:///home/chronos/u-173c11a2015f686fa7a457f227479319f7391c06/MyFiles/Downloads/The%20Hero's%20Joseph%20Campbell.pdf>

Directions:

Step 1: Select a film that you believe follows the Hero's Quest as prescribed by Campbell. While all 17 stages might not appear, a good number of them should apply, if you've selected well.

Step 2: View the film, studying the hero's journey closely and taking notes to prepare for your outline. The hero may be male or female, and human or creature.

Step 3: Using your first outline as a guide, create a new outline, identifying specific ways that the hero of your selected film embodies the 17 characteristics and experiences you identify in your first outline.

Be prepared to explain and discuss your outline in class.

Here are some film suggestions, or seek out a different title on your own:

Star Wars (any)
Spider Man
Lion King
Lord of the Rings (any)
Men in Black
The Hunger Games
The Princess Bride
The Hobbit (any)
Jaws
The Wizard of Oz
Where the Wild Things Are
Avatar
Where The Wild Things Are
Buffy the Vampire Slayer
Shrek
Field of Dreams

The Monomyth of the Hero

Movie Title:

I. Departure

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

II. Initiation

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

III. Return

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

Part II: *The Dark Knight Returns* by Frank Miller

Directions:

Complete the following BEFORE you begin reading the graphic novel:

1. Read the following explanation of *how* to read a graphic novel:

<https://batmantdkr.weebly.com/what-is-a-graphic-novel.html>

2. View the following video segments on the history of Batman.

<https://youtu.be/Ayzi41mz1qA>

<https://youtu.be/uZwxseZiBpw>

<https://youtu.be/lwOgaUkG9VA>

<https://youtu.be/C5uHCYPkINw>

3. Read the following brief historical context for the setting of *Batman, The Dark Knight Returns*.

<https://batmantdkr.weebly.com/historical-context.html>

4. Reference the attached character list as needed:

<https://batmantdkr.weebly.com/batman-the-dark-knight-returns-character-list.html>

5. Take Notes as you read the novel.

Scholars note that In America, “literary” heroes have largely assumed characteristics separate from those of Campbell’s traditional monomyth, forming what John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett call the “American monomyth.” In the American monomyth, “A community in a harmonious paradise is threatened by evil; normal institutions fail to contend with this threat; a selfless superhero emerges to renounce temptations and carry out the redemptive task; aided by fate, his decisive victory restores the community to its paradisaic condition; the superhero then recedes into obscurity” (Lawrence and Jewett: “The Myth of the American Superhero” 6). However, in *The Dark Knight Returns* by Frank Miller, Batman’s role does not appear to be so simple. “Good” and “evil” are questioned, as are the ideas of the “harmonious paradise” and the “selfless superhero.” As readers, we question if “good” can even exist without “evil,” and we consider who determines the nature of “justice.” In Miller’s text there are “dualities”^{*} within the characters that call into question our notions of hero, of morality, and of justice.

^{**}*duality* refers to having two parts, often with opposite meanings.

During (or immediately upon completing the graphic novel), take some notes addressing the following:

- Identify dualities and/or inconsistencies or contradictions within characters or in how characters are perceived by others.
- Consider how and to what extent you recognize Campbell's stages in *The Dark Knight Returns*.

You may use these notes when we write an in-class essay on the nature of Batman as hero, both in the traditional sense as outlined by Campbell in his stages and according to the “Myth of the American Superhero” as briefly referenced above.