

188+ stage Hero's Journey

This is a heavily reduced sample document. You can purchase the full document from <http://www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html>

The following are a) some very salient points concerning the Hero's Journey and then b) only 6 small, often missed, briefly explained, non-linear stages of the Hero's Journey.

We suggest reading this whole document.

Some portions of this document may be in colour, so be wary if you are using only a black and white printer.

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Forward

The Hero's Journey is the template upon which the vast majority of successful and effective stories and Hollywood blockbusters are based upon.

If you want to write and sell stories and screenplays, then gaining a deep understanding of this template is a priority.

There are more than 188 stages of the Hero's Journey that you need to understand thoroughly. Further, you need to gain a deep understanding of the metaphors.

Our 188+ stage Hero's Journey:

- a) Taps into unconscious expectations the audience has regarding what a story is and how it should be told. You subconsciously revert to this template when you differentiate between good and bad stories.
- b) Lays out the universal structural template upon which situations are superimposed. The movies you have seen may look different, but they are all constructed, almost sequence by sequence, in exactly the same way. They are simply alternate situations superimposed over the same structure.
- c) Gives you a tangible process for building and releasing dissonance (establishing and achieving catharsis, of which there are usually three, four or more).

- d) Tells you what to write. For example, at a certain stage of the story, the focus should be on moving your Hero from the Deep Ordinary World to the Edge of the Ordinary World.
- e) Lays out the movement between Worlds (see later section).
- f) Lays out the process of Transformation (see later section).
- g) Lays out the Process of Detachment and Attachment (see later section).
- h) Lays out the process of confrontation and conquest of the Four Core Challenges in the correct order (see later section).
- i) Lays out the process of Adaptation (see later section).
- j) Helps you understand the terminology and metaphors (see later section).
- k) Provides you with effective worksheets that allow you to quickly extrapolate an idea into a step outline to i) see if it has traction, ii) keep a record of it and iii) develop it before committing to a words-on-paper first draft. Once you understand the 188+ stage Hero's Journey, it is simply a matter of superimposing your situation over the worksheet or template structure.

Deep Knowledge

You may think you know the Hero's Journey, but you do not. It has taken us years to understand it – epiphanies that we give to you in the product at <http://www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html>

Further, we are constantly analysing and deconstructing stories (we have deconstructed thousands, a selection of hundreds of basic deconstructions is available at <http://www.clickok.co.uk/index4.html>) and we are *still learning*. We update the product at <http://www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html> constantly - updates are free once you purchase the product.

The Hero's Journey is a whole lot more than the basic 17 stages, one elicitation being (and even these are often misunderstood):

- The Call to Adventure
- Refusal of the Call
- Supernatural Aid
- The Crossing of the First Threshold
- The Belly of the Whale
- The Road of Trials
- The Meeting with the Goddess
- Woman as the Temptress
- Atonement with the Father
- Apotheosis
- The Ultimate Boon
- Refusal of the Return
- The Magic Flight
- Rescue from Without
- The Crossing of the Return Threshold
- Master of the Two Worlds
- Freedom to Live

Believing

Your first obstacle may be *believing* the core message we are trying to convey:

There is only one story.

The Hero's Journey is the universal template upon which situations are superimposed. This is why stories such as *Alien (1979)*, *Gladiator (2000)*, *Godfather (1972)*, *American Beauty (1999)*, *Annie Hall (1977)* and many others appear to be different but are all constructed, almost sequence by sequence, in the same way.

[This is a far more advanced structure than three-act structure or plot points, which are virtually useless for writing effective and successful stories].

The Hero's Journey (one of its many names; this name is a recent incarnation of an age old process) has been around since the first story. That is because it is what a story is. That is, it is the process of writing an effective story.

Psychologically, certain things happen when you experience a story. The Hero's Journey is that experience. The Hero's Journey is the process of initiating, carrying and closing that psychological movement. The Hero's Journey is the process of setting up catharses and resolving them. The Hero's Journey is the intricate process of laying out your story and bringing it to an effective conclusion.

Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese use this template. Shakespeare used this template!

To start writing successful stories and screenplays, *you need to start believing*.

One way to start believing is to read this document and purchase the full version. Try and understand the messages we are trying to convey. Use the worksheets.

Another way is to stay on our email list and carefully read our tips of the day.

Yet another way to start believing is to start sitting through your favourite movies and deconstructing them frame by frame. After deconstructing 50 different movies, you will begin to see just how much they all mirror each other. After 200 different movies, you will start to realise what the pattern they all follow is. After 500 different movies you will have a pretty definite construct of what that pattern is. After 700 different movies you will pull your hair out because you will realise that you will have to start over because you are dealing with multiple layers of movement that include, Journey, Transformation, Detachment and Attachment, Adaptation, Fairytale Metaphors and a whole lot more.

You will also realise that any stories you have written have huge structural gaps. You will realise why your stories do not work. And you will start rewriting them to fill those gaps. You need to understand the gap (why it is a gap) before you can begin filling it.

It will take you at least three years to arrive at the insights contained within the full document at www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html You will need to read this document multiple2

times and allow the concepts to incubate before you truly begin understanding.

[More about this in the main product at www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html](http://www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html)

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More Than One Type Of Story

Or you may have some experience with the Hero's Journey and believe that it simply applies to a certain type of story (Arthurian Legend, Damsel in Distress, Treasure Hunt etc...). You might even derisively dismiss it.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

The Hero's Journey applies to all stories across genres. It applies to the most gritty, realistic and down to earth stories. It applies to *Annie Hall (1977)* as well as *Lost in Translation (2003)*, *The Royal Tenenbaums (2001)* as well as to *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly (1966)* and any other story you can think of. It also applies to sitcom and other story fields.

In the main product at <http://www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html> we consciously use examples from a diverse range of stories in order to demonstrate the scale and scope of this template.

When we say, "The Hero's Journey is the template upon which the vast majority of successful and effective stories and Hollywood blockbusters are based upon" we actually believe that every effective and successful story is based on the template, but we cannot apply the universal term because we haven't deconstructed every story that has ever existed.

There *are* outliers, that is, there *are* stories that veer from the template (art-house, experimental etc...) but the more

they veer from it, the less effective and the less successful they tend to be.

We constantly get emails from people citing a story that doesn't conform to the template, but every time we analyse that story, we find that it does. A common communication is an email demonstrating that a story following the template has failed at the box-office. Do not get confused between structure and production values or other aspects of the business. Even a good story will fail commercially if executed badly. Even a good story will fail commercially if it isn't distributed. Even a good story will fail commercially if the marketing is weak etc.

More than anything, this document is a resource for screenwriters and commercial storytellers (people who want to reach a mass audience; people who do not want to remain anonymous; commercial is not a negative; people who want to be successful), so it is off-topic to debate whether every story in the universe conforms to this template – what *is* relevant is that the vast majority of successful moving pictures conform to this template.

Finally, do not get confused between structure, situation and style. An infinite variety of great stories are written and produced by superimposing alternate situations and styles over this structure.

[More about this in the main product at www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html](http://www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html)

Creativity Myths

A lack of understanding of creativity and the creative process is the root of many objections to the Hero's Journey (and story structure in general).

Creativity Management is taken seriously by institutions such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton etc. It is studied at the highest academic levels.

Many people doggedly cling to creativity myths for a number of reasons.

Creativity myths that will block your story or screenwriting progress include:

- a) *The best stories are original.* The word "original" is misleading here. Used here, it implies a break with the past, in fact, there is never a break with the past - there is evolution from it. This belief will keep you waiting multiple lifetimes for an "original idea to pop up." And if "inspiration" does come, you won't know what to do with it - you will need to turn to this structure to do something with it.
- b) *I simply sat down and the story simply unfolded from within me.* There is a point when a story begins to write itself, but this only really starts to happen after the structure has been laid out.
- c) *Good ideas just appear from nowhere.* In fact, good ideas appear following a definite, subconscious process. You can increase the frequency of good

idea production quite easily. Good ideas are easy - implementation is harder.

- d) *Structure hinders creativity.* While too much structure kills creativity, so does a lack of it. With the right use of structure, you find that originality emerges from it.
- e) *I watch movies all the time and there are lots of different stories.* The stories you have been exposed to are simply alternative situations superimposed upon the same complex structure. They only look different. To write a good story and see it become a movie, you need to understand that underlying complex structure.

We have done lots of work in this field (managing creativity) and you can access it at <http://www.managing-creativity.com/>

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DNA Propagation

As implied, the Hero's Journey is the DNA of story. This DNA is propagated by a number of processes, including:

- a) Story and screenwriters are consciously aware of the Hero's Journey and model their work around it.
- b) Story and screenwriters study other successful work that is most relevant to their own and ask the right questions: why is the hero on the bus then? Why does that person get shot at that point in the story? Why does the scenery change there? Why does the hero have new clothes at that point? Why do the heroes in five distinctly different movies get submerged underwater at that point? And so on. As a result of this process, the Hero's Journey pattern is mirrored.
- c) Certain dynamic and dramatic techniques make more effective stories. These can be found time and again in screenplays, novels, short stories and so on. The Hero's Journey incorporates these techniques. In fact, these techniques are the Hero's Journey. Again, as a result, the Hero's Journey pattern is mirrored.

[More about this in the main product at www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html](http://www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html)

Universal Terminology

One reason many fail to see the scale, scope and significance of the Hero's Journey is a lack of understanding of the terminology.

The Hero's Journey uses specific terminology, such as "Final Conflict," "Hand-to-Hand Battle," "Unbearable Antagonism," "the Oracle," etc. Again, when taken literally, this misleadingly implies that it is fit for only specific story-types (Arthurian Legend, Damsel in Distress, Fantasy, etc). In fact, metaphorically, the terminology applies to the vast majority (in fact, every) successful story or screenplay you may have come across:

In *The Godfather (1972)*, when Sonny is gunned down, what is that if not an Unbearable Antagonism?

In *Annie Hall (1977)*, when Alvie finally goes to meet Annie in Los Angeles, that is a Hand-to-Hand Battle and is the same one-on-one confrontation as Luke and Vader battling it out at the end of *Star Wars (1977)*; the same mano-a-mano confrontation between Riggs and Joshua in *Lethal Weapon (1987)*, the same confrontation as the one between John McClane and Hans Gruber in *Die Hard (1988)* and the same as the confrontation between Harry and Sally at the end of *When Harry met Sally (1989)*.

[More about this in the main product at www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html](http://www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html)

Metaphors

Another reason many fail to see the scale, scope and significance of the Hero's Journey is a lack of understanding of the metaphors.

For example:

From the fairytales you are aware of, you recognise that "a Hero often battles a Dragon before seizing a Treasure."

In a literal sense, this would be responsible for stories such as *Eragon (2006)*, where a Hero literally battles a dragon.

But in a metaphoric sense, the "Dragon" is an obstacle to the "Treasure," which is something the Hero values.

In *When Harry met Sally (1989)*, Harry must help Sally get over her ex-boyfriend before he is able to kiss and bed her.

[More about this in the main product at www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html](http://www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html)

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Movement Between Worlds

The Hero's Journey details the movement between Worlds.

Every successful story involves the movement from one World to another World. Again, many people seem to overlook the scale, scope, significance and applicability of this.

In *Stand by Me (1986)*, the boys journey from their small town into the World beyond the town.

In *When Harry met Sally (1989)*, Harry and Sally travel from Chicago to New York.

In *The Shawshank Redemption (1994)*, Andy Dufresne is forced from his Ordinary World as banker to the World of Shawshank.

In *Gorillas in the Mist (1988)*, Dian travels from Ordinary World USA to the World of the gorillas in Africa.

Where a story seems to unfold in a single location, the above criteria are met by a traversing through domains.

In *Annie Hall (1977)*, the story unfolds in New York but Annie moves from her apartment into Alvie's apartment (the final act is played out in LA).

In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (1975)*, the story unfolds in a single city, but in and out of the institution.

In *Hard Candy (2005)*, the story unfolds in a single house but moves from room to room and outside.

Further, the criteria is met by the arrival of New Characters into this World.

In *Gosford Park (2001)*, Mary Maceachran and Robert Parks arrive from Another World and are new to this World.

In *Platoon (1986)*, Taylor arrives from Another World and is new to Vietnam.

A "World" is interchangeably literal and metaphoric. It is most often, but not always, metaphoric for a "New State."

In *Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977)*, the arrival of the lights heralds Roy's new state of curiosity, anxiety and obsession. The arrival of the lights is the incident that separates the Ordinary World (state) of calmness and normality and the New World (state) of curiosity, anxiety and obsession.

In *The Thing (1982)*, MacReady et al remain in the same physical place but the arrival of The Thing causes them to enter a new state of anxiety.

In *Kramer versus Kramer (1979)*, Ted and Billy remain in the same house but the departure of Joanne causes them to enter into a new state of cohabitation.

In *Annie Hall (1977)*, Annie and Alvie's meeting causes them to enter into a new state of romance.

Thus a critical first stage of story development is deciding which Worlds your Hero et al traverse.

[More about this in the main product at www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html](http://www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html)

Transformation

The Hero's Journey is also about Transformation.

Every Hero goes on a Journey, the function of which is to stimulate a Transformation. It is the undergoing of the Journey that gives the Hero the capacity to conquer those challenges that were previously unconquerable.

In the beginning of the Journey the Hero is an Ordinary Self and at the end of it a New Self. The New Self is demonstrated by a change in attitudes, norms, values, behaviour and clothing. In the beginning the Hero is dressed in one way and at the end another.

In *Dances with Wolves (1990)*, John Dunbar starts the story dressed as a soldier and ends it dressed as an Indian.

In *Educating Rita (1983)*, Rita starts off as a hairdresser and ends up a student.

In *Erin Brockovich (2000)*, Erin starts off as a poor, single Mom and ends up a wealthy, respected lawyer.

In *The Godfather (1972)*, Michael starts off not wanting anything to do with the Family and ends up running it.

In *The Devil Wears Prada (2007)*, Andy is initially a fashion illiterate and ends up becoming a fashion victim.

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In *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994), Andy starts off as a banker and ends up a respected prisoner.

It is not always the Hero who transforms most:

In *Planet of the Apes* (1968), the apes discover that humans are more intelligent than they realised.

In *Back to the Future* (1984), Marty does not change the most, his father George does.

A story is Transformation.

[More about this in the main product at www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html](http://www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html)

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Detachment and Attachment

The Hero's Journey is also about Detachment and Attachment.

The Hero detaches from the Old World and Self and Attaches to the New World and Self.

It would not be incorrect to say that every aspect of the Hero's Old World is an attachment to the Old Self and every aspect of the New World is an attachment to the New Self.

It would not be incorrect to say that the purpose of each stage of the Journey is to incrementally Detach the Hero from the Old World and Attach him (or her) to the New World.

In *Kramer versus Kramer* (1979), Ted detaches from the office and attaches to Billy.

In *The Godfather* (1972), Sonny's death triggers Michael's rebirth. Sonny is representative of an Old World Attachment that must be disposed off before Michael can be reborn.

In *Raging Bull* (1980), Joey is an Old World Attachment that must be disposed off before Jake can be reborn.

[Also see New Self Theory and Detachment Theory in the Advanced Worksheets section of <http://www.clickok.co.uk/index4.html>].

Adaptation

The Hero's Journey is also about Adaptation.

The Hero ventures into a New World and adapts until he (or she) becomes an integral part of it. This is the becoming of the New Self.

Following that, the Hero battles his (or her) demons to become the Master of Two Selves.

In *Gorillas in the Mist* (1988), Dian becomes one of the gorillas and "owns" the mountain.

In *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1979), Ted becomes a Mom.

In *Educating Rita* (1983), Rita becomes the archetypal student.

[More about this in the main product at www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html](http://www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html)

Old Self, New Self, Master of Two Selves

It is important to note that the "New Self" and "Master of Two Selves" are two separate and distinct stages of evolution.

In *Annie Hall* (1977), Annie as an Old Self is shy and embarrassed. As a New Self, she is living with Alvie and becomes more confident, yet still dependent on him. But as the Master of the Two Worlds and Selves, she decides to pursue a life without Alvie. These are three separate and distinct stages.

Thus there are at least three main stages of evolution that you need to master: Ordinary (Old) Self to New Self to Master of the Two Selves.

Four Core Challenges

Hero's often have to resolve at least Four Core Challenges: the Inner, Outer, Romantic and Greater Antagonism.

In *Titanic* (Academy Award Winner Best Film 1997; No. 1 All-Time USA Boxoffice with receipts of over \$600,000,000), Rose's Inner Challenge is to overcome her commitment to her mother as well as Jack's lower status, her Romantic Challenge is Jack, her Outer Challenge is Cal and the Greater Antagonism is escaping the sinking ship.

In *American Beauty* (Academy Award Winner Best Film 1999), Lester Burnham's Inner Challenge is to feel good about himself, his Romantic Challenge is Angela, his Outer Challenge is his marriage with Carolyn and the Greater Antagonism is Col. Frank Fitts, US Marine Core.

The Four Core Challenges and their classes are confronted and conquered in a specific order. Our 188+ stage Hero's Journey lays out the process of confrontation and conquest of challenges in the correct order.

Multiple Catharses

Stories do not simply end. There is a very distinct process of catharses release. Successful stories end with three, four or more catharses – these catharses are separate and distinct from the Four Core Challenges.

Our 188+ stage Hero's Journey lays out the process of catharses buildup and release.

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Hero Archetypes

There are various types of Hero: a) the good, willing hero (*Star Wars, 1977*), b) the good, unwilling hero (*Shawshank Redemption, 1994*), c) the anti-hero (*Raging Bull, 1980*), d) the villain (*Goodfellas, 1990*) etc. Nevertheless, their stories all mirror the Hero's Journey template. The difference between hero, anti-hero and other variations simply lies in situation, motivation and result – this is discussed in the full version and the Advanced Archetypes, available here: <http://www.clickok.co.uk/screenwriting/HerosJourneyArchetypes.html>

Heroine's Journey. It is a mistake to believe that the Heroine's Journey is separate and distinct from the Hero's Journey. The Journey is about Transformation, Detachment and Attachment, Adaptation etc – these are not gender specific.

In *Million Dollar Baby (Academy Award Winner Best Film, 2004)* – though Maggie and Frankie both have their challenges, the process towards apotheosis and beyond is the same.

The Hero is often a female:

In *Breakfast at Tiffany's (1961)*, Holly is a Hero and Paul is the Romantic Challenge.

In *Erin Brockovich (1999)*, Erin is the Hero and George is the Romantic Challenge.

[More about this in the main product at www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html](http://www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html)

Following are only 6 small, briefly explained, non-linear stages of the Hero's Journey:

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Arrival from Another World

The Hero often arrives from Another World.

In *Platoon (1986)*, Taylor simply arrives in Vietnam.

In *Terminator (1984)*, Reese and The Terminator simply appear from the future.

In *Brokeback Mountain (2005)*, Ennis and Jack simply arrive at the mountain.

In *Dead Poets Society (1989)*, the boys simply arrive at their new school.

[More about this in the main product at www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html](http://www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html)

Devolved Name

The Hero has a "before" and "after" name.

In *Gladiator (2000)*, Maximus is initially called "general". Only later does he become "gladiator."

In *Dances with Wolves (1990)*, the Hero's before name is "John Dunbar" and his after name is "Dances with Wolves."

In *Bull Durham (1988)*, Crash keeps calling Nuke "Meat."

[More about this in the main product at www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html](http://www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html)

Trivial Task

A relative triviality often forces the Hero from the Deep Ordinary World to the Edge of his (or her) Ordinary World.

Red Riding Hood: Go take these cakes to Grandma.

Jack and the Beanstalk: Go to market.

Hansel and Gretel: Go pick some mushrooms.

In *Erin Brockovich (2000)*, the car accident forces Erin to court.

In *Star Wars (1977)*, Luke leaves home to try and bring R2 back.

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Fish Out of Water

The Hero et al are Fishes out of Water during particular stages of the Journey.

In *An American Werewolf in London (1981)*, the boys are fishes out of water in the pub.

In *When Harry Met Sally (1989)*, both are fishes out of water in New York.

In *Brokeback Mountain (2005)*, both Ennis and Jack are fishes out of water on the mountain.

[More about this in the main product at www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html](http://www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html)

Physical Deformation

A physical deformation (also often represented symbolically – the colour red, blood etc...) marks the beginning of the Transmogrification.

In *Silence of the Lambs (1991)*, Clarice cuts herself in the garage.

In *Brokeback Mountain (2005)*, Ennis and Jack fight and bloody each other.

In *The Godfather (1972)*, Capt. McCluskey's punches Michael in the face.

[More about this in the main product at www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html](http://www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html)

Night Sea Journey

One function of the Night Sea Journey is to retrieve an Ordinary (or Other) World Magical Gift that will assist the Hero survive the Near Death Experience.

In *Dances with Wolves (1990)*, John retrieves the guns from the fort.

In *Jason and the Argonauts (1963)*, Jason retrieves Medea.

[More about this in the main product at www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html](http://www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html)

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Conclusion

There is much, much more to this.

If you are serious about writing and selling your work, you need the full document:

www.clickok.co.uk/ClassicHero.html



Kal@clickok.co.uk

London cell / mobile: 077100 80368

Advanced Templates and latest updates at:

www.clickok.co.uk/index4.html