

12 Angry Men (1957): Hero's Journey, Monomyth Basic Elements

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Ordinary World

The Ordinary World in this story is the stage where the men first settle down inside the room.

Ordinary World functions are evident.

For example, the men are locked in (containment).

For example, the heat is oppressive, the air conditioning is faulty, it's going to be the hottest day of the year etc (oppression).

For example, the polarity and division between archetypes is evident. The men don't know each other and are poles apart from Henry Fonda.

Call To Adventure

The Call to Adventure in this story is Henry Fonda's vote of not guilty, his need to talk about it before he sentences a young life to death.

Implicitly, this is a call to change.

Refusal of the Call

The Refusal of the Call in this story is the 11 other men's refusal to change their minds after Henry Fonda votes not guilty.

Supernatural Aid / Meeting The Mentor

The supernatural aid / mentor in this story is Henry Fonda.

His thoughts on why he thinks the boy may be innocent.

And then his guidance throughout the story, which eventually causes each man to change.

First Threshold

The border into the First Threshold in this story is the moment when the men start challenging the evidence.

The encouragement into it is dialogue such as, "let's get going" and "stop acting like a kid" (maturity function).

The separation within the First Threshold is the appearance of the duplicate switch knife and the second juror's not-guilty vote.

Belly of the Whale

The Belly of the Whale in this story takes place during the toilet break, after a second juror sides with Henry Fonda.

It references the dangers of the deeper change and warnings / interdictions against it.

Also, the seeming impossibility of the change required is also manifest.

For example, a quite reasonable juror warns Henry Fonda that he may manage to convince everyone the boy is innocent, but what if he really did kill his father!

For example, most of the men seem dead set against changing their minds.

Road of Trials

The Road of Trials in this story is from the moment when the men "get down to business" - they begin tackling the rest of the evidence, which seems like certain fact.

The men start arcing, moving toward union and synergy with Henry Fonda.

Meeting The Goddess

The Goddess is a metaphor for a number of things, including the return of hope.

This happens when Henry Fonda disproves a witness' testimony.

When the latino juror makes his impassioned speech about democracy.

When the vote crosses the halfway mark - 6 not-guilty votes compared to the original one.

Woman as Temptress

The woman as temptress is a metaphor for a number of things, including encouragement into the near death experience.

Symbolically, this is demonstrated by the rain (Night Sea Journey) and the near death symbolism of the switch-blade sequence.

Atonement With The Father

The atonement in this story is the confrontation with that limitation, which has been a driving force.

Demonstrated by the overt appearance of prejudice - the racist rant - and all the men turning their backs on him.

Apotheosis

The apotheosis in this story is the overcoming of previous limitations. Prejudice has been let go of. The racist ranter votes not-guilty.

Ultimate Boon

The ultimate boon in this story is the overturning of the witness' testimony. The woman's eyesight is in question, which convinces all but one juror.

The situation is reversed from the original - now it's 11 voting not-guilty against one.

Freedom To Live

The Freedom To Live stage in this story is literal. The young man is acquitted - he is literally free to live. The jurors are no longer contained and free to leave.

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