**The Hero’s Journey**

**I. DEPARTURE**

**A. The Ordinary World**

* Here, the hero & his environment are introduced to the audience
* The hero does not know his personal potential or calling
* Most stories take the hero out of the ordinary mundane world & into a special world, new & alien

**B. Call to Adventure**

* The hero is presented with a problem, challenge, or adventure to undertake
* Once presented with the Call to Adventure, he can no longer remain indefinitely in the comfort of the Ordinary World

**C. Refusal of the Call**

* Often at this point, the hero balks at the threshold of adventure, Refusing the Call or expressing reluctance
* After all, he is facing the greatest of all fears, terror of the unknown
* The hero is not yet committed to the journey & may still be thinking of turning back
* Some other influence—a change of circumstances, a further offense against the natural order of things, or the encouragement of a Mentor—is required to get him past this turning point of fear

**D. Meeting with the Mentor**

* The relationship between the hero & mentor is one of the most common themes in mythology, & one of the richest in its symbolic value
* It stands for the bond between parent & child, teacher & student, doctor & patient, God & man…
* The function of mentors is to prepare the hero to face the unknown
* They may give advice, guidance, or magical equipment

**E. Crossing the First Threshold**

* Now the hero finally commits to the adventure & fully enters the Special World of the Story for the first time by Crossing the First Threshold
* He agrees to face the consequences of dealing with the problem or challenge posed in the Call to Adventure
* Often at the threshold, the hero encounters people, beings, or situations which may block his passage—these “threshold guardians” have many functions:
  + They protect the hero by keeping him from taking journeys for which he is unready or unprepared—however, once the hero is ready to meet the challenge, they step aside & point the way
  + To pass the guardian is to make a commitment to the journey in which the hero is saying, “I’m ready. I can do this.”
  + They may try to prevent the hero from leaving, or may try to prevent the hero from entering into the new realm—whatever side they are on, they will not let anyone pass who is not up to the task at hand

**II. INITIATION**

**F. Tests, Allies, & Enemies**

* Once across the First Threshold, the hero naturally encounters new challenges and Tests, making Allies & Enemies, & begins to learn the rules of the Special World
* One of the greatest tests on the journey is to differentiate real helpers from “tempters,” or enemies—Tempters, or enemies, try to pull the hero away from his path; they use fear, doubt, or distraction; they may pretend to be a friend or counselor in an effort to divert the hero’s energy to their own needs, uses, or beliefs
* The Tests or trials fall into 2 categories:
  + Physical deed—the hero performs a courageous act in battle or saves lives
  + Spiritual deed—the hero learns to experience the supernatural range of human spiritual life & then comes back with a message
* There are several different challenges the hero might face:
  + Brother Battle—many heroes find themselves locked in battle, either physical or psychological, with someone who is a “brother,” whether a blood relation or a symbolic brother
  + Dragon Battle—some heroes will battle literal dragons guarding their treasure, but other heroes will battle their inner dragons, the doubts & fears they have about their own ability; whether literal or figurative, the dragons must be slain in order for the hero to complete the journey
  + Abduction/ Sea Journey/ Night Journey—often in the hero’s journey, either the hero or someone close to the hero will be abducted & taken away; as the hero is transported elsewhere, or as the hero chases after the captors, the journey may take the hero over the sea or on a long night journey—even if there is no abduction involved, most heroes are traveling great distances, so a sea journey or a night journey is not uncommon
  + Entering the Belly of the Whale—This is a reference to the story of Jonah & the whale—when the hero is drawn deep into the journey & must face his greatest fear or the greatest evil, the hero is in the belly of the whale; for some heroes, they are literally in the belly of the whale, like Pinocchio, but for most this is symbolic
  + Meeting with the Goddess—many heroes will meet a woman of great power while on the journey; the Goddess may offer the hero wisdom, or she may offer a supernatural aid that will assist the hero when he faces the greatest challenges on the journey
  + Sacred Marriage—the hero will often have a special connection with one character in the story & this connection can serve as a motivation to the hero to continue the journey when all else seems hopeless—sometimes, the sacred marriage is literally a marriage, but often it is a symbolic union of two souls
  + Ritual Death or Dismemberment—in order for the hero to be transformed, he must give up his old life; many times this is done through a symbolic death; in other stories, the hero will lose a limb, which will signify the loss of the old self

**G. Approach to the Inmost Cave**

* The hero comes at last to the edge of a dangerous place, sometimes deep underground, where the object of the quest is hidden
* Often it’s the headquarters of the hero’s greatest enemy, the most dangerous spot in the Special World, the Inmost Cave
* When the hero enters that fearful place, he will cross the second major threshold
* Heroes often pause at the gate to prepare, plan, & outwit the villain’s guards
* This is the phase of Approach—in mythology, the Inmost Cave may represent the land of the dead—Approach covers all the preparations for entering the Inmost Cave & confronting death or supreme danger

**H. The Supreme Ordeal**

* This is a critical moment in any story, an Ordeal in which the hero must die or appear to die so that he can be born again
* It’s a major source of the magic of the hero myth
* This is also the key element in rites of passage or rituals
* The hero in every story is an initiate being introduced to the mysteries of life & death
* This is sometimes described as the hero’s lowest point or darkest moment
* The separation has been made between the old world & old self & the potential for a new world/self
* By entering this stage, the hero shows his willingness to make a change, to die & become a new person

**I. Reward**

* Having survived death, beaten the dragon, etc… the hero now takes the possession of the treasure he has come seeking, the Reward
* It might be a special weapon like a magic sword, or a token like the Grail, or some elixir which can heal the wounded land

**III. RETURN**

**J. The Road Back**

* This stage marks the decision to return to the Ordinary World
* The hero realizes that the Special World must eventually be left behind & there are still dangers, temptations, & tests ahead
* The hero begins to deal with the consequences of confronting the dark forces of the Ordeal
* He may be pursued on The Road Back by the vengeful forces he has disturbed by seizing the sword, the elixir, or the treasure

**K. Resurrection**

* The hero who has been to the realm of the dead must be reborn & cleansed in one last Ordeal of death & Resurrection before returning to the Ordinary World of the living
* This is often a second life-and-death moment, almost a replay of the death & rebirth of the Ordeal
* Death & darkness get in one last desperate shot before being finally defeated
* It’s a kind of final exam for the hero, who must be tested once more to see if he really has learned the lessons of the Ordeal
* The hero is transformed by these moments of death-and-rebirth & is able to return to ordinary life reborn as a new being with new insights

**L. Return with the Elixir**

* The hero returns to the Ordinary World, but the journey is meaningless unless he brings back some Elixir, treasure, or lesson from the Special World
* Sometimes the Elixir is treasure won on the quest, but it may be love, freedom, wisdom, or the knowledge that the Special World exists & can be survived