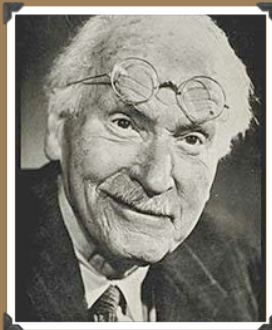


# Monomyth: The Hero's Journey

Based on Joseph Campbell's Hero with a Thousand Faces



**Carl Jung 1875-1961**

Much of Carl Jung's work focused on theoretical psychology with a strong emphasis on philosophy. Jung believed looked to dreams, art, mythology, philosophy, and religion to understand the unconscious mind. Jung's studies focused on archetypes and the collective unconscious.

## Psychoanalytic Theory

- 🕒 Collective unconscious - we all have common psychic material that has accumulated through past experiences of the generations
- 🕒 Jung distinguishes between the individual unconscious and the collective unconscious unlike Freud.



**Joseph Campbell 1904-1987**

Carl Gustav Campbell was a comparative mythology professor. He has received much acclaim for his book, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, which tracks the common journey that the hero takes in mythology. This text is rooted in the psychoanalytic theory with strong emphasis on Carl Jung's work.

## The Hero with a Thousand Faces

- 🕒 First published in 1949
- 🕒 Sets forth a pattern that the archetypal hero takes on his/her journey as observed through comparative mythology

**Archetype** - a recurrent symbol or motif

**Monomyth** - the hero's journey has been termed the monomyth

# Monomyth

“A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man”

*Introduction, The Hero with a Thousand Faces*

Joseph Campbell, Comparative Mythology Scholar

# Monomyth

“the One myth”

Our goal in this portion of the unit is for you to examine “the messages encoded in our myths.” You will select a modern, fictional hero for this exploration. This hero will likely fit into an archetype.

archetype -

[www.MonoMyth.org](http://www.MonoMyth.org)

## Behind the Scenes of the *Matrix*

Ordinary World  
Call to  
Adventure  
Refusal of the  
Call  
Meeting with  
the Mentor  
Crossing First  
Threshold  
Tests, Allies &  
Enemies

Be sure to watch the video clip  
located on the *home* page  
of the course wiki.

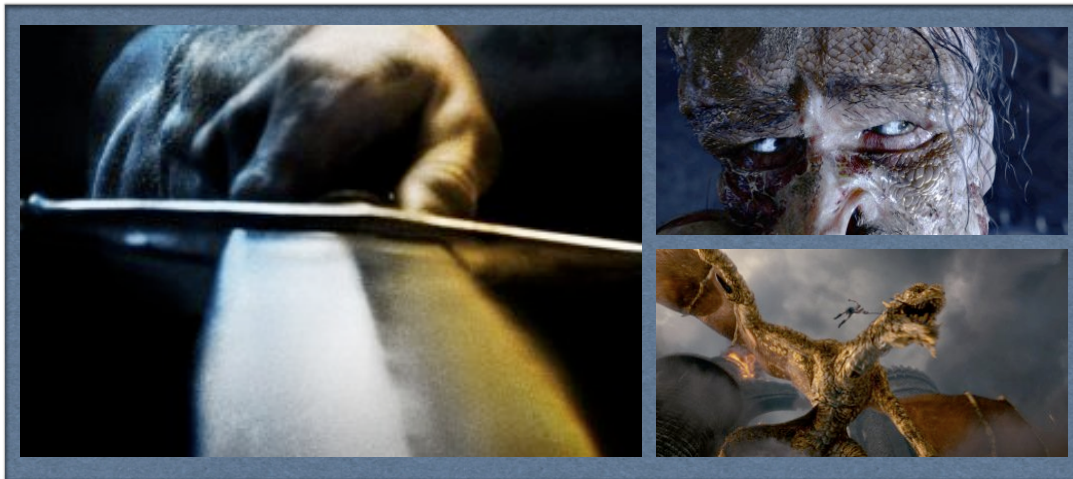
Approach to  
Inmost Cave  
The Ordeal  
Reward  
Road Back  
Resurrection  
Return with  
Elixir  
Ordinary World

*Monomyth adaptation: Chris Vogler*

# Behind the Scenes of the *Matrix*

“Chris Vogler, a Hollywood film producer and writer, created a now-legendary 7-page memo, *A Practical Guide to The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Reference),” which was adapted into the book, The Writer’s Journey: Mythic Structure of Writers in 1990.

This raises the question: do we create stories based on this paradigm through our collective unconscious or has the appropriation of Campbell’s model influenced the recreation of the monomyth?



## The Hero’s Journey & Beowulf

# Beowulf: Epic Hero

*Following Beowulf's Journey  
through Raffel's translation &  
Zemeckis' performance  
capture interpretation.*



## **Departure:** Step I - The Call to Adventure

Destiny has summoned the  
hero into the unknown,  
whether he is fully aware of  
it or not.

### **Print & Film**

Beowulf is called to adventure  
when he hears the stories of  
Grendel as Hrothgar “[laments]  
leaped the seas” (l. 64-65).

## **Departure:**

### **2 - Refusal of the Call**

Sometimes, weary of the unknown, the hero often turns his back on the call

Beowulf doesn't refuse the call. He accepts the quest since he is the "strongest of the Geats" (l. 110). A true Anglo-Saxon hero does not refuse the call because the most honorable fate would be to find death in battle. This is also supported in the film as Beowulf and Wiglaf discuss the glory of battle as they venture to Denmark.

## **Departure:**

### **3 - Supernatural Aid**

A sage appears before the hero. The sage is often masculine and elderly. This character may offer amulets or advice to help the hero on his journey.

#### Print

God offers Beowulf the strength to conquer Grendel without weaponry. It is with God's strength that Grendel "[knows] what it [means] to feud with the Almighty" (l.385).

#### Film

The dragon horn provides Beowulf aid. It lights his path through the lair and becomes his bargaining chip. Hrothgar also acts as Beowulf's aid, warning Beowulf of the greed.

## **Departure:**

### **4 - The Crossing of the 1st Threshold**

The point when the hero crosses over the threshold into the world of the unknown. The hero may encounter a “threshold guardian” at this crossing.

#### **Print & Film**

Beowulf crosses the 1st threshold when he battles Grendel; Beowulf fights Grendel in the common world, the mead hall, which is juxtaposed with the unknown through Grendel.

## **Departure:**

### **5 - The Belly of the Whale or Rebirth**

The hero separates from the world and his self. The hero may appear to have died; this is often the hero's lowest point of the journey.

#### **Print**

Beowulf reaches the low point of his journey when he fights Grendel's mother. For the first time, we see that Beowulf is not immortal--weaponry and his mail shirt save him from the mother's “stabbing blade” (l. 521). Hrothgar's men believe he has been killed.

#### **Film**

Beowulf reaches his low point in the film when he enters the lair. It is here that Beowulf is tempted by Grendel's mother. Figuratively, this is when “[he] has died.”

## **Initiation:** Step I - The Road of Trials

The hero must face a slew of obstacles. The hero's consciousness magnifies as he conquers the trials. Trials may come in the form of dreams.

### **Print**

Upon killing Grendel, Grendel's mother retaliates by killing one of Hrothgar's men and claiming her son's arm.

### **Film**

Beowulf dreams that Queen Wealtheow has come to him asking for an heir; she then transforms into Grendel's mother (*the following step*).

When Beowulf awakes, all of the men in the hall have been killed. Beowulf crosses into the unknown world of the lair.

## **Initiation:** 2 - Meeting with the Goddess or Marriage

As the hero masters life and the possibilities of the unknown, a marriage often occurs to a mother or queen figure.

### **Print**

There is a lack of female influence in the print text. This could be a mark of the time period as men were revered as warriors--the scop's focus was on the male warrior.

### **Film**

Beowulf's *initiation* began long ago when he first encountered the "incarnation" of Grendel's mother under the sea when he was battling the sea monsters. It is here that Beowulf enters the world of unknown emotion and temptation--his ultimate downfall.



## **Initiation:**

### **3 - Woman as Temptress**

The temptress symbolizes the material temptations of life that may lead the hero away from the journey.

#### **Print**

See earlier claim regarding the lack of female presence in the print text.

#### **Film**

Beowulf comes to Denmark seeking glory in battle but is led astray from this journey when Grendel's mother tempts him. She promises, "and I shall weave you riches beyond imagination. I shall make you the greatest king that ever lived. As long as you hold me in your heart and this golden horn remains in my keeping, you will forever be king...This I swear."

## **Initiation:**

### **4 - Atonement with the Father**

The center of the journey. The hero must confront the element that holds the ultimate power in his life; this is often the father-figure.

***This stage falls out of order in both texts.***

#### **Print**

The element that holds the ultimate power in Beowulf's life is fate. He realizes that God has the ultimate power in the end as death is inevitable.

#### **Film**

Beowulf's son sends a message to Beowulf through Unferth who claims that the last words spoken to him were, "The sins of the fathers." This suggests that Grendel's mother holds the ultimate power over Beowulf as he traded glory for greed.

## **Initiation:**

### **5 - Apotheosis**

Apotheosize - to deify or elevate to the rank of god

The hero enters a state of divine knowledge. This occurs at a moment of rest.

#### **Print & Film**

Both mediums suggest that Beowulf enters apotheosis during his 50 year reign as king. This is suggested by difference in Beowulf's perspective on battle. When Beowulf was a thane, he accepted battle with the belief that God would give him the power to conquer; whereas, he realizes later his worldly state.

## **Initiation:**

### **6 - Ultimate Boon, *sometimes known as the elixir***

boon - something beneficial  
elixir - a magical or medicinal potion

The hero accomplishes the goal of his journey.

#### **Print & Film**

In both textual translations, Beowulf brings Grendel's head and the hilt of the giant's sword back to Herot. He accomplishes the goal of his journey by ridding Hrothgar and the Danes of the monsters. While these "trophyies" suggest a literal boon, Beowulf has brought knowledge back to the Danes: that one can defeat monsters and revive salvation. A theme also echoed in the battle with the dragon.

## **Return**

### **Step I - Refusal of the Return**

The hero has come to know  
the harsh realities of the  
world and questions  
whether he should return.

#### **Print**

Beowulf is an idyllic hero; he does not falter in the print. In fact, he assumes the quest, upholding the archetypal hero's image. Beowulf will return to Geatland for, ultimately, he protects his chieftan--Higlac.

#### **Film**

There is a lack of support to address this. Beowulf has accepted his fate and must correct his wrongdoings. He acknowledges to Wealhthow his love and error when tempted by Grendel's mother.

## **Return**

### **2 - Magic Flight**

In some journeys, the hero  
must protect the boon as he  
ventures back to the world.

#### **Print & Film**

The magic flight in Beowulf's journey occurs when he fights the dragon. It is necessary for Beowulf to defeat the dragon in order for his story to be told. The story becomes the essential knowledge which empowers a hero-centric, war culture standing at the crux of Anglo-Saxon religion.

## **Return**

### **3 - Rescue from Without**

The hero may obtain help  
from guides to successfully  
deliver the boon.

#### **Print**

Beowulf receives help from his loyal  
thane, Wiglaf. Wiglaf enables Beowulf to  
claim treasure for his people and to sing  
the song of Beowulf.

#### **Film**

Beowulf's men are in proximity to help  
but can offer no aid. The film suggests  
that Beowulf must conquer the dragon  
on his own in order for the ultimate  
boon--the hero's story--to be delivered.

If there is any aid in this moment, it  
would stem from Wealthow and Ursala.  
As the dragon attacks, Beowulf is forced  
to go beyond the call of duty to end the  
curse--he cuts off his own arm to save  
the women--the bearer's of his people.

## **Return**

### **5 - Master of the Two Worlds**

The hero has gained the  
knowledge of both the  
material (secular) and  
spiritual worlds.

#### **Print**

Recall our in depth discussion regarding  
the afterlife(s). Beowulf becomes the  
master of the supernatural world  
through Christ and master of the human  
world through the immortal tale.

#### **Film**

I would argue that Beowulf has mastered  
the secular world by ending the curse of  
Grendel's mother and realizing the err of  
his ways; however, I am not sure that the  
film fully justifies that Beowulf has  
conquered the spiritual world. This  
could be due to the lack of Christian  
influence exemplified through Hrothgar  
who merely seeks a hero rather than  
praying to "*the new Christain God.*"

## **Return**

### **6 - Freedom to Live**

The hero no longer fears death, which enables the freedom to live.

#### **Print & Film**

Though Beowulf dies in both texts, the ultimate boon becomes the story of Beowulf, the story of a hero. Underlying that story is the essential claim made by the film's writer, Neal Gaiman: "It's not that you're telling people that dragons are real, but...that dragons can be defeated."

Once the word of Beowulf's death spreads across the lands, Beowulf's people will be under attack and will soon find themselves in the place of *The Seafarer* with no mead hall.

## **Questions to Ponder:**

**How does performance capture film allow translation to more fully capture the essence of the original print text?**

**Why have the filmmakers interpreted/ altered the original print text?**

monomyth

**How valid is this outline of Beowulf's quest?**

# Disclaimer

While Campbell's model has entered cultural discourse, many scholars refute its validity. Current trends in mythology focus on particularism, rather than collectivism. However, Campbell's model has been strongly analyzed as an approach to compare literature from different cultures and time periods.

# Works Cited

Campbell, Joseph. The Hero with a Thousand Faces.  
New World Library. Novato, California: 2008.

*needs to be completed*