

The Hero's Journey

An archetype is a kind of universal symbol which recurs in various cultures all over the world. An archetype can be a character, a setting, or a theme. One common archetype is The Journey. The Journey can be broken down into four parts:

- The hero begins his journey in his ordinary world. Following some conflict, the hero receives a **call to adventure** to leave his ordinary world in search of something. Sometimes the hero tries to refuse the call, but he eventually sets out on the journey because there is too much at stake for him not to.
- The hero usually encounters a **mentor or helper** who **crosses the threshold** with the hero. The threshold is the point at which there is no turning back. Once the hero has crossed the threshold, he encounters **tests, allies and enemies** which must be overcome. The mentor or helper assists the hero.
- Once the initial obstacles are overcome, the hero and his allies reach the **approach**, and prepare for a major challenge. During the approach, the hero undergoes an **ordeal** which often threatens his life. He is required to face his greatest fear, and emerges stronger and as if he has been reborn. Their greatest fear is sometimes exposed, and from the ordeal comes a new life or revival for the hero, as well as a **reward**.
- The hero and his companions then begin their **return** to their ordinary world with their treasure. The climax of the story occurs at the threshold of the hero's ordinary world. Here, the hero faces one last test, which threatens to undo his previous achievements. Passing this final test marks the hero having come full circle, and the major conflict that precipitated his journey is now resolved. The hero returns home, often to become a leader or well respected person in his ordinary world.

DIRECTIONS: Think of a modern novel which employs the archetype of the hero's journey. Make a note of what happens in each part below. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, write an essay that analyzes how the modern work is both representative of the hero's journey and how the material is rendered new.

The Call to Adventure _____

Crossing the Threshold _____

The Ordeal _____

The Return _____

