

Hero's Journey / Monomyth Questions and Answers

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Kal Bashir's Hero's Journey: The Psychology of Story and Screenplays

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The psychological view of story reverses the common perception of it.

For example, it seems that in DIE HARD (1988), the terrorists are a problem and McClane has to get rid of them. Well, that's true. But from the psychological point of view (POV), the reverse is also true - the terrorists turn up to help McClane solve his personal problems. And from the specific hero's journey / monomyth POV, to help McClane overcome his inner fear.

For example, it seems that in JAWS (1975), the shark is a problem and Brody has to get rid of it. Well, that's true. But from the psychological POV, the reverse is also true - the shark turns up to help Brody solve his personal problems. And from the specific hero's journey / monomyth POV, to help Brody overcome his inner fear.

The Hero's Journey and Transformation through a New World/State is the template upon which the vast majority of successful stories and Hollywood blockbusters are based upon. Learn about this at <http://www.clickok.co.uk/index4.html>

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How many Refusals are there in the first act?

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There are usually at least two refusals in the first act - refusal to leave the Ordinary World and refusal to enter the First Threshold.

Refusal has many forms - reluctance, containment, refusal from other archetypes, inability to leave until/unless something is achieved or broken away from etc.


Arguably, the first act is an exercise in refusal - at root, it is all about the refusal to change.

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Why do I need to do research?

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Why do I need to do research? A sixteen year old in Florida is the same as a sixteen year old in California is the same as a sixteen year old in Japan is the same as a sixteen year old in India. A bar in Florida is the same as a bar in California is the same as a bar in Japan is the same as a bar in India. A sixteen year old working in a bar in Florida is the same as a sixteen year old working in a bar in India. I can use my own experience of working in a bar as a sixteen year old and set the story in India without going there to do research?

The purpose of research is authenticity. It also feeds your world creation.

You can use your own experience and inventiveness and set the story in India. Especially if your sixteen year old will have similar experiences to your own or faces the same problems that you had to face.

But there are differences that could make the Florida vs India stories very different and each story interesting in it's own right.

For example, it's illegal to drink and work in a bar in Florida when you're sixteen, so an unusual set of circumstances would cause that to come about. I wouldn't be surprised if there are some Indian states where it's not illegal. Where it is, it's not as strictly enforced, you don't have your ID checked and it's much more culturally frowned upon, especially for a girl.

For example, it's not as unusual for a sixteen year old in Florida to have her own car as it is for a sixteen year old in India.

So the answer is yes and yes. Yes you can do it without research and yes research will likely help. But it very much depends on the story you're trying to write, the particular set of experiences and events you're trying to transport.

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Is the suspense genre different than the mystery genre?

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On the structural level, both suspense and mystery are the same.

There are superficial differences. For example, a mystery story may start off with a murder and then a hero is brought in to solve it. Whereas with a suspense story, the intent to murder may be discovered and the hero goes about trying to prevent it.

But on a structural level, both will involve an Ordinary World, a New World and so on.

Suspense is a feeling of uncertainty and anxiety. Arguably, each scene in every story should have a certain amount of that - in other words, the reader should want to keep turning pages...the viewer should want to keep watching,

sitting on the edge of their seat.

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What font should I write my screenplay in?

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I would stick with the font that industry standard software, like Final Draft, automatically sets for you.

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Do detective stories follow the hero's journey?

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Absolutely. Detectives still leave their Ordinary World, they still enter a New World and so on. All the archetypes are there etc.

Take Chinatown (1974), Gittes leaves his office (Ordinary World), reluctantly taking on the fake Mrs Mulwray's job (Herald, Refusal of the Call).

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Does the heroine's journey differ from the hero's journey?

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The hero's journey is a metaphor for change, becoming whole, going home, letting go, overcoming limitations, finding who you are, growing up...and so on.

None of the above are gender dependent. All of the above are gender independent.

The heroine's journey is exactly the same as the hero's journey. To write a heroine's journey story, simply swap the gender roles.

In Erin Brockovich (2000), Erin played the hero and George played the love interest.

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Broken Metaphors

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Stories are about repairing what is broken. Often, some broken tangible will act as a metaphor for what is broken and it's gradual repair will signify that all is being set right.

In In The Heat of the Night (1967), Gillespie's gate and air conditioning is broken.

In The King's Speech (2010), the toy aircraft is broken,

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Does destiny and fate play a part in the hero's journey?

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Absolutely.

The hero's journey is a metaphor for maturity and it is every youth's fate and destiny to grow up.

The hero's journey is a metaphor for becoming whole and it is one's fate and destiny to try and become whole.

The hero's journey is a metaphor for returning home and it is the lost soul's fate and destiny to try and return home.

The hero or heroine has limitations and it is their subconscious desire, fate and destiny which puts them in situations which help overcome those limitations.

Antagonisms are physical representations of psychological demons and it is the hero's fate and destiny to battle and try and subdue them.

Fate and destiny are alternative words for inevitability.

In Halloween (1978), fate and destiny are mentioned in the classroom - it is Laurie's fate and destiny to meet Michael Myers.

In In The Heat of the Night (1967), it is Virgil's fate and destiny to be trapped in Sparta until his limitations can be overcome.

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Making Supporting Characters Interesting

The same principles apply to supporting characters as to lead characters. These include,

Give them arcs.

Give them flaws.

Give them challenges.

Give them relationships.

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The Difference Between Supporting And Minor Characters

Supporting characters are not the same as minor characters.

As a generalization, minor characters populate worlds and supporting characters help the hero achieve his or her goals.

From that point of view, all supporting characters can be described as supernatural aids - even the antagonist, who assists by provoking, threatening and attacking.

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Making Minor Characters Interesting

Well here's a suggestion:

Give them an arc.

You don't have to show the arc in detail, but you can show your minor characters changing as a result of the hero's journey.

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Do trilogies follow the hero's journey?

Absolutely. Lord of the Rings (2 001/3) shows that.

But more accurately, each story within a trilogy follows the hero's journey cycle. Each story within a trilogy stands on its own.

And on top of that, the trilogy as a whole may follow the hero's journey cycle.

It works rather like a TV series.

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Is Theme The Same As Morals?

Theme is not the same as morals.

Theme can be described as a unifying concept which you arc through.

Morals imply that you are trying to communicate some message that differentiates right from wrong.

Granted, they are often intertwined, but not necessarily.

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Is fear the same as a flaw?

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Fear is not the same as the flaw.

When we talk about fear, we usually mean innermost fear. This is something which will have to be confronted.

When we talk about flaw, we mean some external representation of the damage which has been caused and which will be repaired.

There is a link, however. The ability to deal with the innermost fear is the cause of the flaw. As we begin to deal with the fear, so we begin to heal the flaw.

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Does A Script Need A Hero?

The first thing to do here is define "hero." Well, at least to say what a hero need not necessarily be. The hero need not necessarily be good or altruistic or similar.

Then we come to see the hero more as a protagonist and the question becomes, do we need a protagonist?

Well, the important thing to remember is that the story will need to involve change.

You can concentrate that change, or watch it carried through, by a protagonist or spread that out a little with an ensemble.

So we can conclude that the story does not need a hero per say, but that some focal point, be it an individual or group, helps.

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Where Two Characters or Heroes Change

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This is the dual-hero scenario and is quite common.

For example, When Harry Met Sally (1989) both change.

For example, both Virgil and Gillespie change in In The Heat of the Night (1967).

In essence, both heroes enter a New World and are provoked to change. Often, each provokes the other to change.

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How do I integrate many villains into the story?

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Pretty much the same way you integrate many characters.

For example, you can group the villains, like in Lord of the Rings (2001) where Saruman's henchmen form an army.

For example, you can divide the villains into a hierarchy of antagonists and deal with each hierarchy in each act (the most potent last).

The thing to remember about antagonists and villains is that they are there to provoke, so you just need to manage all your villains in some sort of fashion so that they do that.

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Can I Introduce Characters Late Into The Story?

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Can I Introduce Characters Late Into The Story? Like in Act 3?

It is common to introduce supporting characters late in the story. For example, in Star Wars (1977), the generals are introduced in Act III.

There is also no technical reason why you can't introduce main characters late in the story.

The thing to remember is that one of the roots of story is the letting go of

limitations. As long as that is fulfilled...in other words, somehow the story resolves, then there is no problem.

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Character Development Techniques

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Here's one suggestion:

Work out who your lead is (focal point) and develop his or her arc. His or her inner fears, how they manifest themselves, the motivation for their journey, how they break away, how they gradually / significantly change and what provokes that change.

Then separately do the same for other characters.

And then weave them all together.

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Must certain things happen on a specific page in a screenplay?

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The act breaks, let's say Syd Field's break at page 30 in a 120 page film script, and other markers, are useful targets in which to write that part of the story most effectively.

It's not that you must do something on a specific page, it's that you have to work your way around the cycle and dividing that into page targets is helpful.

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What is a character's most defining trait?

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At root it is the character's innermost fear.

In Anna Karenina (2012), it's Anna's fear of losing her husband's protection.

In Jurassic Park (1993), it's Grant's fear of children and commitment.

In Ted (2012), it's John's fear of growing up and all it entails.

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How do I improve my vomit draft?

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The pure vomit draft is close to a stream of consciousness blurted out. You take the tastiest 20 percent of the vomit and start again with that as a building block (later drafts).

To improve the vomit draft, try outlining in detail beforehand.

In the detailed outline, you go through a process of trashing bad ideas and selecting good ones. You structure them out so that the story goes somewhere. You arc the characters.

Then when you finally get to writing that first draft, it's less vomit and more intent.

In other words, use the outline as the idea generating exercise, not the first draft.

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Does good structure make a good script?

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There is certainly a correlation between good structure and a good script. As long as the story is good. Good structure won't make a bad story good.

On the other hand, a good story without good structure is a curiosity - good stories tend to be good because everything else is right too - structure, pacing etc.

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Four or Five Act Structures (or more)

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There is only one story cycle.

All these act structures simply break down the cycle into various parts.

Though there are arguments for two acts, it is better to stick to the three act principle and then consider all larger act structures to be divisions within those three.

In other words, 4 or 5 or more acts are simply 3 acts broken down further.

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