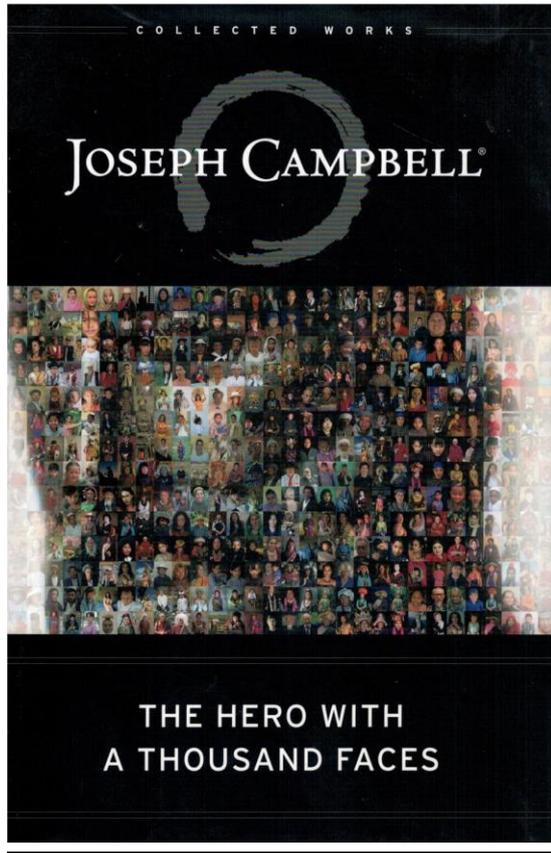


THE HERO WITH A THOUSAND FACES BY JOSEPH CAMPBELL



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The Monomyth

- Campbell jumps right in, discussing recent anthropological studies that have benefited from a mythic approach.
- Psychology, too, he says, is down with those mythic vibes, in part because they help people – even modern people – understand what drives them.
- He tells the story of a young American man who dreamed that he accidentally killed his father by dropping a hammer off the roof.
- His mother comforts him in the dream, and Campbell points out how Freudian this all is.
- He explains how the father represents danger, the mother safety, and how killing the father to enjoy the attentions of the mother was pretty much what Freud was all about.
- You can find this idea in ancient stories such as **Oedipus**, whose famous complex was based on killing his father and marrying his mother.
- Campbell talks about another dream, this one from a woman afraid of a big white horse following her.
- The horse is sent to a barbershop and comes out as a man.
- Campbell talks about how the dream represents the way we face our fears: leaping into the unknown where there's great danger...but also rewards and treasures too.
- He discusses psychoanalysis, the science of reading dreams, and says that ancient cultures had their own rituals for reading dreams too.
- Dreams, and the stories that come from them, speak to the painful transitions we experience in life: growing up, finding a spouse, working hard for the things we want, saying goodbye to family members who die, and so on.
- Mythology provides symbols to help us understand these transitions in life, and how our triumphs and heartbreaks can be reflected in those symbols.
- In short, if we want to know how to be brave in the face of trouble, to enjoy the good things life sends our way, and to understand why life works the way it does, we look to our myths.
- In the modern world, we try to halt the progress of life: we want to stay young, stay strong, never grow old, and never die.
- In Campbell's opinion, this isn't a healthy way to live.
- Men dream of childhood heroes while being doctors and lawyers and such.
- Women look for love while men are away.
- According to Freud, the first half of life focuses on the rising sun: the goals and dreams we want to achieve when we head out into the world.
- The second half of life involves an inversion of that, dealing with the eventual return to the grave.
- He tells the Greek myth of King Minos, who was busy with being king and ignored his wife.
- His wife fell in love with a bull and gave birth to a monster, the Minotaur, which was caged in an elaborate maze beneath King Minos's palace
- Campbell explains that Minos, not the queen, is to blame for this because he's seduced by the material things of this world...which creates monsters.
- Heroes are created to deal with monsters, and the rewards heroes reap aren't just for them – like Minos and his selfish pursuit of gain – but for *everyone*.
- When monsters are created, they're a sign of spiritual death.
- When heroes crush those monsters, they signal a spiritual rebirth.

- That's the essence of the Hero's Journey.
- The hero (or heroine) can survive adversity, brave dark paths, and fight through all their own weaknesses and self-doubts.
- In the process, they can save the people of their community who choose a less adventurous life.
- Campbell finishes the story of the Minotaur with the arrival of Theseus.
- Minos's daughter Ariadne falls in love with Theseus and turns to him for help in solving the labyrinth: just as we normal people turn to the hero for help in unraveling the labyrinth of our fears and problems.
- Campbell breaks his chapters into individual sections, and because those sections contain specific steps in the Hero's Journey, we're not about to leave them out here.

Comedy and Tragedy

- Modern literature, Campbell claims, is focused on failures, flaws and the shortcomings of human existence; in short, it's often tragic.
- Comedy serves as satire, but not as any logical expression of happiness or joy.
- Fairy tales and myths fill in that gap, providing triumph, success and fulfillment in a dramatic context, and redeeming us.

The Hero and the God

- The arc of a mythic tale can be summed up in three words: separation, initiation, return.
- The hero leaves the mundane world, faces challenges, gains skills and becomes an adult, only to return to his place of origin and share the bounty of what he has earned.
- Examples follow (oh man, Campbell *loves* his examples): Jason and the Golden Fleece, Prometheus, the story of the Buddha, Moses, and others.
- Campbell then lays out the basic pattern of this story, and the steps it encompasses (we're not gonna list it because each step has its own chapter).
- He stresses the importance of the hero returning from his or her adventure to share the rewards with the whole community.
- That's what separates a hero from a selfish person like Minos.
- The powers the hero brings are powers that have been in him or her all the time, and only need to be brought out with the trials of his or her adventure.
- The hero and the god are thus one and the same: mirror images of each other that the hero's journey has brought out.
- This theme recurs in stories told throughout the world.

The World Navel

- The purpose of the Hero's Journey is to release the power of the divine into the world: to reconnect us with the primal forces of the universe.
- The divine energy is surrounded by the universe: The World Navel.
- The World Navel brings both good and evil, linked together just like everything else in the universe.

The Call to Adventure

- The chapter opens with a retelling of the famous fairy tale "The Princess and the Frog."
- A princess drops her golden ball in the water, where it sinks deep down to the bottom.
- A frog asks if he can help and the princess promises him anything if he can get the ball back.
- The frog returns the ball, and asks to be her companion in exchange.
- She's grossed out by him, but what's a girl gonna do? (Don't worry. As you may suspect, he turns into a handsome prince when she finally decides to kiss him.)
- The frog returning the princess's golden ball to her is an example of the call to adventure.
- The call is a crisis: something that spurs the hero or heroine into action.
- The call involves danger, peril and dark places like a forest (or the bottom of a pond, to follow the princess and the frog).
- A herald is involved, announcing the danger or the task to be undertaken.
- More examples follow, including King Arthur and the story of an Indian woman from North America.
- The hero belongs to an ordinary community when the call arrives, and his or her energy is realigned from inside the community to outside of it.

Refusal of the Call

- Sometimes the hero doesn't answer the call or want to take up the task.
- The story makes it very clear: refusing the call is a bad idea.
- Why? Because it leads to stagnation and a refusal to advance forward in life.
- The divine being linked to the hero harasses him or her constantly, trapping him or her in a symbolic labyrinth.
- Example? We got one! How about the story of Daphne, who flees from the loving arms of the god Apollo and gets turned into a laurel tree as a result?
- Campbell notes that the philosopher Carl Jung believes that psychoanalysis finds patterns and fixations very similar to the story of Daphne.
- Campbell relates the stories of Sleeping Beauty and Kamar al-Zaman from *Arabian Nights* to demonstrate what happens when the hero refuses the call.

Supernatural Aid

- For heroes who don't refuse the call, their first encounter with the outside world and the challenges they need to face is with a mentor.
- This is a wizard, dwarf or some similar figure who provides protection for the hero on the first stage of the journey.
- This could be the Blessed Virgin in Christian stories, the Spider-Woman in African stories, a wizard, a god like Hermes, or others.
- The mentor represents destiny and serves as a comfort and a reassurance for the hero on his or her adventures.
- In some cases, the mentor is also the herald who starts the whole thing rolling with the call to adventure.

The Crossing of the First Threshold

- With destiny having taken a friendly (and usually bearded) form, the hero moves forward until meeting a "threshold guardian."
- Beyond this guardian lies the unknown: darkness, danger, the general "Here Be Dragons" thing.
- The guardian is usually tricky and deceitful, not what he or she first appears....but s/he holds wisdom about the darkness too: two key aspects in the figure.
- Another avalanche of examples from all over the world follows: Pan in Greek mythology, the Russian "Water Grandfather," and others.
- The guardian can be protective, warning the hero from venturing past the known world; yet, only by passing the guardian can the hero gain the knowledge and the power that he or she needs.
- By passing or defeating the guardian, the hero enters a new stage of existence, leaving his or her old life behind.

The Belly of the Whale

- Having passed the first threshold, the hero enters a womblike state called "the belly of the whale."
- We know what you're picturing—this always makes us think of [Pinocchio](#), too.
- He or she is swallowed up by the power of the threshold – symbolized by a sea monster or something similar – and seems to have died.
- Crossing the threshold can be seen as a kind of self-annihilation, or – less gruesomely – a transformation into another state of being.
- And, as usual, Campbell wraps up with some more examples.
- *So many examples.*

Initiation

The Road of Trials

- Once the first threshold is passed, the hero faces a series of challenges that he or she must overcome.
- Campbell tells the story of Cupid and Psyche as an example of the challenges faced on the road of trials: surviving the wrath of Venus with help from an army of ants.
- He follows with a report from the ancient Lapps about a shaman who needs to handle a number of different obstacles during a supposed visit from the land of the dead.
- Any figure who undertakes the Hero's Journey comes across a "spiritual labyrinth," populated by "symbolic figures" that test him or her.
- This is a part of a ritualistic cleansing, focusing the hero on spiritual rather than worldly matters.
- In dreams, we still face these obstacles, often with no idea how to vanquish them.
- The hero's obstacles are symbolic of those fears and anxieties in our dreams.
- Example time: the goddess Inanna's descent into the underworld from ancient Sumerian mythology.

The Meeting with the Goddess

- Once the obstacles are overcome, the hero joins with "the Queen Goddess of the World," which is not, in fact, Oprah Winfrey's new title but rather the representation of the whole universe.
- The encounter with her usually takes place at the edge of the world, or the bottom, or somewhere else where you literally can't go any further.
- Example du jour: The Prince of the Lonesome Isle, from Ireland, who meets with the Queen of Tubber Tintye.
- The Queen represents the feminine in all its forms: mother, lover, sister, friend.
- She is all the gifts and the bounties of the earthly world: the promise of perfection.
- She can also be a bad mother or lover: selfish, forbidding or in some cases absent entirely.
- The example for this second part of the goddess is Diana, who turned the hunter Actaeon into a stag when he spotted her bathing in the nude.
- The first part of the Queen Goddess, on the other hand, is the all-nurturing mother, with accompanying examples from the Tantric books from India (cue the slinky music).
- But she's also the embodiment of death and the end of the world: womb and tomb in one.
- His example concerns the 19th century Hindu mystic Ramakrishna, who oversaw a temple dedicated to both sides of the Goddess.
- She's the embodiment of the whole world: everything within it, good and bad alike.
- She guides the hero into a new state: one freed of limitations where everything is possible.
- We are then treated to the story of the five sons of the Irish king Eochaid.
- The hero wins over the goddess not with cleverness or strength, but with a "gentle heart."
- If it's a heroine instead of a hero, she proves herself fit to be the consort or companion of a god.
- If she's searched for him, she joins him; if she doesn't want him, she sees that her own power doesn't require him.

Woman as the Temptress

- Hang on tight, because we're getting a little Freudian, since the hero, having taken the mother-goddess as his own, formally assumes his father's place.
- Because of this, and because our understanding of the bliss of the world is incomplete, we sometimes respond with revulsion when the mother-goddess takes us.
- In other words, as the hero transcends the earthly boundaries, the mother-goddess – as a symbol of the world he's leaving behind – becomes disgusting. (We know, we know: sexist much?)
- In this formula, the mother-goddess becomes death: a siren luring the hero to a grisly demise.
- Example: St. Peter and his daughter Petronilla, followed by the writings of the Puritan thinker Cotton Mather.

Atonement with the Father

- We continue with Puritan examples: Jonathan Edwards' sermon about the wrath of God.
- The father figure punishes the hero for presuming to take his place.
- The hero is often protected by the mother-goddess in this ordeal, who gives him another center to focus on now that his connection to the father is severed.
- The Navajo story of the Twin Warriors serves as an example for this point, followed by the Greek story of Phaethon.
- The point of it all is that the father serves as the person who initiates the hero into the world, and if the initiation is imperfect, trouble ensues.
- The father has two aspects too, just like the mother, but with a third side added: the father is now a rival.
- The father passes on the power of the world... but only if the son (or daughter) is worthy.
- And then we go *really* Freudian: another dream example, followed by a description of the rites the father figure puts the hero through.
- The phallus replaces the breast as the end-all be-all and the rites serve to release the hero's penis (power) from the confines of the father.
- Examples from Aboriginal coming-of-age myths follow, then one about Zeus (the ultimate punishing father figure) and a number of additional myths.
- The father figure represents the paradox of creation: he holds all the power yet denies it.
- In order to claim it, the hero has to pierce himself through the core of his being – annihilating himself.
- Why? He has to acknowledge that all the horrible things in the universe are part of the universe too... and need to be accepted instead of rejected.
- Example? The story of Job, punished by God.
- The punishment serves to further test the hero, who emerges with the acceptance of the father figure and is shown the bliss of the world.

Apotheosis

- Once the human hero gets past his fears and connections to the world, he is released, and the world becomes enlightenment, held in the hero's hands.
- The figure of enlightenment is both male and female, as a representation of everything in the universe.
- The best aspects of both mother and father are kept, while the bad aspects are removed and cast aside.
- More examples follow, pulled from Australian myths and biblical imagery.
- Enlightenment means we break free of all our earthly prejudices and become one with God, and by extension, the universe.
- Bet you'll never guess what Campbell follows this with: *examples*. (This time, it's the Bodhisattva myth from Asia.)
- Bodhisattva links the myths with their psychological origins and the ways this enlightenment can be reflected in our own minds.
- Psychoanalysis serves a similar purpose to the myth, resolving conflicts in the patients' own mind to bring them peace and enlightenment.
- The secret is that we don't just find enlightenment. *We are* enlightenment!

- Numerous examples from Eastern culture follow.

The Ultimate Boon

- We return to the Prince of the Lonesome Island, and how easily he achieves his goal.
- This signifies the delivery of the Ultimate Boon: the reward for the hero's transcendence and wisdom.
- The hero is destroyed and reborn as an indestructible being, possessing all the power in the universe.
- The Ultimate Boon involves infinite abilities, infinite bliss and a party that just never ends.
- Examples (we know, we know) include Olympus and the Christian notions of Heaven.
- It's a fairly immature fantasy, but Campbell also reminds us that those kinds of fantasy are very primal too: tied into our earliest emotions and no less powerful for their immaturity.
- He cites the Hindu story of gods and titans battling for immortality.
- Humor plays a role in transcending these fantasies: without humor, they become focused on baser issues like acquiring power and controlling people by promising them similar amounts of power.
- By interacting with the gods and goddesses that grant him such power, the hero isn't looking to steal their power from them, but rather to take on their grace.
- The gods don't always understand that, which means the hero must sometimes trick them into surrendering that grace.
- The example du jour is the story of Maui in Polynesian culture, tricking the Guardian of Fire to surrender his power.
- It's followed by the story of Gilgamesh, who sought a source of immortality.
- Immortality, Campbell stresses, is spiritual, not physical. (Aspiring vampires take note.)
- Attempting to gain physical immortality or boons of a physical nature is bound to disappoint.
- An example: King Midas, who wants everything he touches to turn to gold and ends up starving to death because he can't eat.
- Dante makes a similar realization at the end of *The Divine Comedy* as he gazes upon God, and Buddha's victory beneath the Bo Tree.

Return

Refusal of the Return

- With the hero attaining everything he desires, you might think it's time to roll the credits. But you'd be wrong.
- The hero must return to the normal world and share his or her gifts with everyone.
- Unfortunately, most heroes just say no to returning home.
- Buddha, for instance, questioned whether his wisdom could be understood, while the Hindu leader Muchukunda slept in a hidden cavern rather than returning to the world.

- In some cases, the hero is justified in this belief and is left in his bliss without having to return to the world.

The Magic Flight

- Assuming the hero chooses to return to the world, he still has to get there.
- If he's stolen his boon or treasure, he's going to be chased by all those cranky demons and gods he stole it from, resulting in a comic chase.
- As an example, Campbell cites the Welsh story of Gwion Bach, who flees from angry giants by turning into various animals like rabbits and fish.
- More examples follow: the first shaman, Morgon-Kara from Siberia, and a Maori folk tale about a fisherman who had a (literally) monstrous wife he had to flee from.
- In some cases, obstacles are tossed in the hero's way as he flies back, and the danger levels may still be high.
- Campbell's example in this case is the story of Jason, who must overcome a number of tasks once he seizes the Golden Fleece.
- It's followed by tales of the Japanese god-hero Izanagi and the Greek hero Orpheus, both of whom had to flee the underworld.
- Orpheus is particularly important, since he looks back when he is told not to and loses his love, who he'd ventured into the underworld to find.
- Human failure, not divine failure, is what causes troubles at this stage in the Hero's Journey.
- And yet the Hero's Journey isn't about failure but fulfillment. Better get some rescuing in there.

Rescue from Without

- Sometimes the hero can't return to the world on his own; he needs some help from someone else to do it.
- The examples used include Raven, the helpful trickster of Native American legends, and Amaterasu, Japanese Goddess of the Sun.
- The wisdom in this comes from the fact that we realize that *all* things are part of the divine...so that outside help is actually just another manifestation of the hero's own immortality and power.
- All of that eventually leads the hero back to his or her former home, armed with the gifts and wisdom won by all of his or her adventures.

The Crossing of the Return Threshold

- There's a division between the normal world the hero left and the supernatural world where he or she had his or her adventures.
- Yet they're actually all part of the same universe, and by exploring the unknown side, the hero unifies them in his or her own being.
- The hero now has to express what he or she has learned to the normal world, a world that may not be ready to hear it.
- This is a tough task, but it's necessary because it advances the world and moves everyone forward spiritually, not just the hero.
- Our example du jour is Rip Van Winkle, who lies in an enchanted sleep and then is mocked and persecuted when he returns home.

- The Irish hero Oisín suffers a similar fate when he returns to the world.
- Campbell points out that time is often dilated when the hero goes on his or her adventure: that one year in the supernatural world may equal a hundred in the normal world.
- What the gods see as an eternal, unchanging world, mortals experience as swirling chaos.
- The problem for the hero involves conveying that sense of eternal bliss to a world that cannot or will not see it.
- In some stories, that can be achieved by an "insulating horse" which allows the hero to speak to the world without actually touching it.
- Before that can happen, however, the hero has to survive the stress of returning to the world.
- Examples include Arabian tales of the clashing jinns Dahnash and Maymunah.
- Though the transition is difficult, it's also inevitable: destiny will make sure it happens.

Master of the Two Worlds

- The hero's ultimate goal is to bridge the mortal and the divine; since he can move back and forth between them, he's the one who can bring them together.
- Campbell cites maybe the most obvious example in the entire book: Jesus Christ, who represents both the human and the divine in a single being.
- The facts of a mythic story aren't relevant: it doesn't matter if it actually happened or not.
- The truths these stories hold are the important thing: the way they can show us how to respond to conflicts and trials in our own lives.
- Therefore, it's not a single event, but something that resonates throughout all of time.
- Campbell cites the Hindu "Song of the Lord" as an example.
- Symbols, such as the kind found in the Hero's Journey, are simply the means by which the message is communicated, not the message itself.
- Symbols, therefore, can be fluid, and change to fit new times and new cultures, rather than staying bound in one place.
- Individuals who surrender their fears, limitations, and failings – their individual needs – become vessels for spiritual and religious fulfillment.

Freedom to Live

- The purpose of the Hero's Journey, as a story, is to reconcile our individual needs with the "universal will" – in other words, to help us, as individuals, function more harmoniously with the universe.
- We're back to Gwion Bach for an example.
- The hero represents the universe in a constant process of becoming: eternal yet ever-changing.

The Keys

- Campbell starts the chapter with a diagram of the Hero's Journey, summing up the previous 240-odd pages of text (cheat-sheet fans, take note).
- He stresses that every tale is different, and that some emphasize specific steps in the Hero's Journey more than others.
- He returns to the Eskimo story of Raven as an example.
- In cultural myths later in a given culture's life, the important images can be more obscure and harder to find.
- This is because older, simpler images no longer feel pertinent, and in many cases, the myths become swallowed up with less important details.
- When this happens, life goes out of the mythology, and it becomes a relic.
- When this happens, we can rejuvenate the myths by seeing the potency of stories in the past and applying that potency to a modern context.
- Campbell cites the rite of baptism, which is a Christian/Catholic tradition but has roots in much older mythology.

Part II is called "The Cosmogonic Cycle." Don't worry, guys: we'll explain.

From Psychology to Metaphysics

- Psychologists, Campbell argues, understand that myths and fairy tales hold patterns that match our dreams....and by extension our internal thoughts and emotions.
- Myths express our unconscious fears, desires and tensions, using symbolism to give those vague emotions a form we can latch on to.
- The difference between myths and dreams is that myths can be given formal shape by our conscious thoughts, while dreams are vague and don't always follow logical patterns.
- They also represent specific spiritual principles, whether it be energy (in a purely rational context), mana, karma or simply the power of God.
- They help awaken our minds and put us in a more spiritual state of being.

The Universal Round

- The cycle of the universe—and of myths—matches that of night and day.
- Existence is an endless cycle of awakening, living, sleeping (dying) as the light fades and rises again each dawn to do it all over again.
- He cites examples from the Aztecs, and the myths of the Jains from India (who pictured time as a twelve-spoked wheel, which incidentally happens to be [on the Indian flag](#)).
- The wheel is just another symbol, a way of showing us what Campbell calls the cosmogonic cycle.
- In this cycle, our consciousness travels through three states of being: waking experience, dream experience, and dreamless (presumably blissful) sleep.
- In the first stage, we encounter life lessons.
- In the second stage, we absorb these lessons as we dream.
- In the final stage, we enjoy it all and know everything.
- We cycle through them all every day, and throughout our entire lives.
- The Hindu culture expresses this through the chant "AUM"

- A is waking life.
- U is dream life.
- M is deep sleep.
- The silence surrounding the chant is the unknown: God, the cosmos, or some suitable stand-in.
- Myth is a way of giving it all concrete shape, especially the silence.

Out of the Void – Space

- Mythology, especially that involving creation, is also laced with destruction.
- Myths carry a sense of doom, but are ultimately about fulfillment and life.
- The meaning isn't carried in the symbols, but rather in the person himself or herself.
- Dramas present us with strange images that shock us out of our complacency, forcing us to look at the world differently.
- Campbell then breaks down the stages of the cosmogonic cycle.
- First, there's the creation of form from formlessness.
- He cites a creation myth from New Zealand as an example, as well as more examples from Hebrew, Indian and Chinese cultures.

Within Space – Life

- The creation of the world provides space for the second stage of the cycle: the production of life.
- For this task, the world is separated into male and female, and the process resembles physical birth.
- Campbell goes back to the New Zealand creation myth to illustrate this.

The Breaking of the One into the Manifold

- As life expands into the world, a crisis is created.
- The world splits into two planes of existence: the sky and the underworld.
- The first part of the cycle focuses on the Creator, or God; the second part focuses on humans, or the life within the Creation.
- That involves a sudden transformation, from perfect to flawed.
- This prevents the cosmic cycle from continuing, as the "children" (humans) seize and divide the power of the "parent" (god).
- Examples abound, from the New Zealand story to the Greek myth of creation to the story of Marduk from Babylon.
- But destroying the god-creator doesn't *really* destroy it; just divides it up into little pieces.
- Campbell observes that this is a paradox, like many in mythology: a beautiful act of creation made up of pain, destruction and division.
- Myths serve to acknowledge the agony of that process, while reminding us of the peace and harmony that surrounds it.
- Again, the crucifixion of Jesus makes a great example: beauty and harmony is achieved through unbelievable suffering.

Folk Stories of Creation

- Simple folk stories are much more straightforward than the cosmogonic cycle: they don't seek to understand the meaning of it, they just observe.
- Creation myths are usually the same: a shadow creator gives the world a form slowly, then deals with the creation of man and the finality of death.
- Campbell notes that many of these myths are playful, and their simplicity suggests that people didn't actually believe them as literal truth.
- He points out the presences of clown figures in creation myths, who create troubles and difficulties in the newly formed world.
- Again with the examples, this time from New Britain and Siberia. (We might also point out the Christian serpent in the Garden of Eden as a good example.)
- Nevertheless, folk stories contain the same spiritual truths as the more elaborate or textured myths.

The Virgin Birth

Mother Universe

- The father's spirit creates the world by passing his energy through a transforming figure: the mother of the universe.
- The mother is represented in Christian text as the "waters" that God moves over in Genesis, while Hindu myths also speak of a mother figure who constitutes all space and time.
- Some cultures do away with the father figure completely and leave the mother universe as the creator.
- Campbell cites the Finnish tale of Kalevala as an example.

Matrix of Destiny

- The mother of creation will often appear to human beings in various disguises in these stories, comprising birth and death, depending upon the specific form.
- Campbell returns to the New Zealand creation myth.
- The three stages of the cosmic cycle are on full display: waking life, dream life and dreamless bliss.
- The parental figures who create the universe vanish into the void, leaving humanity alone on the earth to move the cycle into another phase.

Womb of Redemption

- With humanity left on its own, life becomes a struggle: mistakes are made, ego and arrogance cause difficulties, and creation suffers.
- The people need someone to redeem them and end that suffering: someone who takes on the form and function of the divine.
- Having reached the bottom of the cycle, it's time to move on up: enter the hero.
- The example, again, comes from Christianity: the virgin birth that will save us all.
- Other examples stem from South American stories and the Hindu tale of Shiva.

Folk Stories of Virgin Motherhood

- Stories of virgin births aren't limited to Christianity, as evinced by a folk story from Tonga.

Transformations of the Hero

The Primordial Hero and the Human

- We now see two stages of this: the creation of the world by the divine and the passage of history via humanity.
- The second half of that, the one we're all used to, is where the hero arises: claiming the divine power of the gods in the form of a mere mortal.
- That marks a slow movement away from myth and towards fact: the divine recedes, details move from myth to legend and then to history until finally we're left with the mundane details of recorded time.
- Example: Mwuetsi the Moon Man, and the story of various Chinese Emperors.

Childhood of the Human Hero

- Many myths show the entire life of the hero as extraordinary, not just his Journey to solve a specific ill.
- This suggests that the hero is either a normal man who attains wisdom, or a figure of destiny, chosen by the gods to serve as a hero.
- The first part of the book, "The Adventure of the Hero" details the first notion (a normal man who attains heroic stature on his own).
- The second notion – that of the hero as an extension of divine will – is now explored.
- As a figure of destiny, the hero must experience the three stages of the cosmogonic cycle consciously – understanding them all – then bring that wisdom back for the world to share.
- This extends to real-life figures who are the subject of legend: tales will be made about their deeds that have a fantastic quality to them (think of George Washington and the cherry tree).
- Campbell cites King Sargon of Agada, Pope Gregory and Charlemagne as examples of real-life people who get this treatment.
- The Biblical figure of Abraham is discussed at length, as is a native American figure named Kut-o-yis.
- The child-hero will live in obscurity for many years, which means he faces danger, or at least being held back from his potential for a while.
- He may gain benefits during this time, too, from a helpful companion or guide.
- You need to have something special to survive such an experience: the myths show this with stories of amazing strength, intelligence and insight at an early age.
- The big example of this is Hercules strangling the serpents sent to kill him in his crib, but Campbell goes on to cite the Hindu god Krishna too.
- The childhood cycle for the hero ends when the hero ends this period of obscurity and becomes known.
- Sometimes, his "coming out" will create a crisis that needs to be resolved.

- The world will be remade after the crisis in a new form, such as after the Crucifixion, or the Pueblo story of the water jar.

The Hero as Warrior

- The hero's birthplace, or the place where he grew up, is the navel of the world.
- Campbell talks about a hero myth from Siberia to prove his point.
- The hero eventually leaves this spot to fulfill his destiny.
- Victory comes not over a threat or a danger so much as the status quo: the monster he or she slays represents The Way Things Are.
- The monster holds onto his power and does not want to change.
- But he's also proud, since he thinks his power belongs to him instead of the universe.
- The hero knows the monster's weakness and destroys the monster easily.
- In the process, he frees the world to move with fluidity instead of being stuck.
- He then needs to clear the world of all lingering monsters, who usually reside in caves or the wilderness, away from civilization.
- Campbell returns to Kut-o-yis as an example of this tendency.
- He also cites Hercules, Theseus, and Jack the Giant Killer as other examples, as well as the French story of St. Martha.

The Hero as Lover

- With the monsters dead and rigidity destroyed, the hero can then take a wife.
- She is his mirror, his other half, and can often see his destiny.
- He must usually overcome a specific obstacle or set of obstacles to get her.
- Our example for this one is Cuchulainn, a hero from Ireland.

The Hero as Emperor and Tyrant

- The hero is an agent of the cycle, and works to continue, um, cycling it.
- In some cases, the hero exists to reestablish the world's connection to God: you usually see that in religious contexts.
- Campbell returns to the story of the Pueblo hero, Water Jar boy.
- If the hero is blessed by the father, he takes the father's place as a ruler.
- He reflects the balance and the axis of the world as a king.
- Sometimes, however, the hero falls back into a purely human state, which turns him from wise king to despotic tyrant.
- The Persian legend of Jemshid illustrates this point.
- He no longer carries the balanced wisdom of the normal and supernatural worlds.
- He is now a tyrant, and it's up to another hero to usurp him.

The Hero as World Redeemer

- If the hero rules in the place of a symbolic father, then two rites of initiation must take place.
- The first is the son serving as emissary to the father.
- The second leads to his understanding that he and the father are one.

- Heroes of this second type are the highest sort: the world redeemers, the ones whose authority becomes divine.
- The example for this is the Apache hero Jicarilla.
- The hero can still perform heroic deeds, but they're done with the understanding that they could be accomplished instantly by the power of the divine which he contains.
- The example involves Krishna and his cruel uncle in Hindu mythology.
- There is often a period of desolation here, caused by the hero's remaining human faults.
- The redeeming god-hero thus becomes the destroying god-hero, perpetuating the cycle and confirming that the god's power is to both create and destroy the world.
- In this sense, the hero-as-tyrant is still representative of the symbolic father, just as the hero-as-just-ruler-is. After all, evil is as much a part of the universe as good.
- Campbell stresses that these are just two different ways of telling the same story: the son assuming the place of his father.
- The hero will become the tyrant, unless he crucifies himself: dying only to be reborn.
- As the son takes the father's place, the many become one again... and the cycle continues.

The Hero as Saint

- The saint, as you may expect, is a hero devoid of any real flaws.
- The saint-hero eliminates any and all shreds of self-interest and embraces the wholeness of the universe.
- The example is, as you may have suspected, an actual saint: Thomas Aquinas.
- They essentially don't return from their journey, moving beyond the mortal realm and existing only in secondhand form like legends.

The Departure of the Hero

- Every hero's story has to end, either with death or a departure of some sort.
- Examples include Death coming to Abraham and another anonymous dream.
- In many cases, the hero doesn't actually die, but actually just sleeps and will arise again when he or she is needed.
- Campbell's examples? Charlemagne and the Aztec serpent Quetzalcoatl.
- Some heroes can postpone death and attempt to remain in the mortal realm, as the Irish hero Cuchulainn and the Pueblo's Water Boy do.

Dissolutions

The End of the Microcosm

- Each and every one of us is the hero. There, Campbell said it.
- We all have a king or queen within us: the greatest that we can be spiritually, and not just physically.
- In death, the individual is taken into the universe and becomes one with it.

- The journey of the soul through all stages of life is the same as the Hero's Journey: the final journey is the one we all take at the end of our lives.
- Copious examples from China, Egypt and the Aztecs follow.

The End of the Macrocsm

- The universe follows the same cycle as the individual: being born, living, thriving, declining and perishing.
- End-of-the-world stories from Mayan culture illustrate this trend, as do the Viking story of Ragnarok and the Christian notion of Armageddon.

Myth and Society

The Shapeshifter

- There's no end-all-be-all way to interpret mythology, so Campbell wants us to know that our mileage may vary.
- He talks about the myth of Proteus, where grasping the thing you want to understand is impossible.
- Modern society interprets myth in a huge number of ways, applying it to religion, metaphysics, psychology, natural studies and others.

The Function of Myth, Cult and Meditation

- Individuals are limited by who they are; they're only one small part of humanity.
- The totality of man exists only in society, not in the individual.
- Rituals of birth, death, weddings and similar events help connect us to this larger whole, making us a part of a larger community.
- Being cut off from that sense of community can be painful.
- Rites and rituals for death, the changing of the seasons and so forth, are an acknowledgment of the new phase in life and should be celebrated, as they were in ancient cultures.
- There's another option: to separate yourself from the world like a monk and contemplate the universal human being within.
- The goal is not to see, but to understand.
- That eliminates any sense of self... as all becomes one.

The Hero Today

- That's all a far cry from our democratic culture, which values the power of the individual.
- We focus on the secular and have no more time for gods or legends.
- In the past, people found meaning with their group; now, we focus on the individual.
- Stories of heroes need to come from the contemporary age and reflect our unique perspective and sensibilities.
- We can't do this with simple consciousness, which we use to solve our problems; we need to reconnect with the dream state.
- The mysteries of the ancient world no longer exist: there's no more to explore.

- As individuals in modern society, we must become the hero to save society, instead of the reverse... and we must do so in the utter despair of loneliness.