The Hero’s Journey Archetypal Pattern
From Joseph Campbell’s *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*

**First Stage: The Departure**

*step: 1. The Call to Adventure*

*brief description:* The call to adventure is the point in a person's life when they are first given notice that everything is going to change, whether they know it or not.

Questions to help frame this step:
- What stage of life is he or she in?
- What do you see coming next for this person?
- What would cause the person to leave this stage, to "leave home"
- What is the person doing when the call comes? Is it an accident, a blunder, something planned, or hoped for? Is it anticipated or dreaded?

*step: 2. Refusal of the Call*

*brief description:* Often when the call is given, the future hero refuses to heed it. This may be from a sense of duty or obligation, fear, insecurity, a sense of inadequacy, or any of a range of reasons that work to hold the person in his or her current circumstances.

Questions to help frame this step
- Does the hero refuse the call?
- If so, what motivates the refusal? Obligation and duty, fear, a sense of inadequacy to take on the quest, a dread or dislike of the task to be taken on?
- Is the person ready to leave home, to accept adult status? If not, why?

*step: 3. Supernatural Aid*

*brief description:* Once the hero has committed to the quest, consciously or unconsciously, his or her guide and magical helper appears, or becomes known.

Questions to help frame this step
- What special friends or helpers does the hero have?
- Does the hero receive some magical help, advice, or talisman from someone wise and benevolent?
- Is there someone who helps them prepare to leave on their journey?
- Is it a one time assistance, or will the helper (or helpers) appear throughout the journey?
- Is the helper an internal aspect of the hero?
step: 4. The Crossing of the First Threshold
brief description: This is the point where the person actually crosses into the field of adventure, leaving the known limits of his or her world and venturing into an unknown and dangerous realm where the rules and limits are not known.

Questions to help frame this step
- What world is being left; what world is being entered?
- What or who is guarding the threshold?
- What obstacles must the hero overcome to truly begin the journey? -limits of home or society, limits of personality, limits of perception, physical limits?
- What events cause the person to cross the threshold?
- What is the threshold and how does the person cross it?

step: 5. The Belly of the Whale
brief description: The belly of the whale represents the final separation from the hero's known world and self. It is sometimes described as the person's lowest point, but it is actually the point when the person is between or transitioning between worlds and selves. The separation has been made, or is being made, or being fully recognized between the old world and old self and the potential for a new world/self. The experiences that will shape the new world and self will begin shortly, or may be beginning with this experience which is often symbolized by something dark, unknown and frightening. By entering this stage, the person shows their willingness to undergo a metamorphosis, to die to him or herself.

Questions to help frame this step
- Is the person ready to transform? Does he or she enter the belly of the whale willingly, or is he or she thrust or captured in that place?
- What self is being left? The self of childhood? Of incomplete or unfulfilled adulthood? An outgrown self?
- What self is the person moving toward?
- What will symbolize this stage in the story?
Second Stage: The Initiation

step: 1. The Road of Trials
brief description: The road of trials is a series of tests, tasks, or ordeals that the person must undergo to begin the transformation. Often the person fails one or more of these tests, which often occur in threes.

Questions to help frame this step
- Given this person's background and experience, what kinds of trials or ordeals make sense for him or her? What would be truly challenging for this person?
- What does the person fear and how will this fear be represented to him or her?
- What does the person consider to be obstacles to progress or growth?
- Does the person have some personality or character traits that will be mirrored back to him or her in a challenging way?
- What strategies, skills, insights, known or unknown strengths or talents, etc, does the person use or develop to survive or resolve these trials?
- What assistance, seen or unseen does the person have or receive to deal with these trials?

step: 2. The Meeting with the Goddess
brief description: The meeting with the goddess represents the point in the adventure when the person experiences a love that has the power and significance of the all-powerful, all encompassing, unconditional love that a fortunate infant may experience with his or her mother. It is also known as the "hieros gamos", or sacred marriage, the union of opposites, and may take place entirely within the person. In other words, the person begins to see him or herself in a non-dualistic way. This is a very important step in the process and is often represented by the person finding the other person that he or she loves most completely. Although Campbell symbolizes this step as a meeting with a goddess, unconditional love and/or self unification does not have to be represented by a woman.

Questions to help frame this step
- How will this step be represented in the story?
- Does the person have a soul mate, another half? Does an all loving god or goddess, or non-gendered but supremely loving force make itself known to the person?
- Can the person accept and/or identify with the ultimate creative/destructive nature of the universe?
- Does the person begin to understand or experience the union of opposites, for example spiritual/material, good/bad, male/female, life/death, etc.
step: 3. Woman as the Temptress

brief description: At one level, this step is about those temptations that may lead the hero to abandon or stray from his or her quest, which as with the Meeting with the Goddess does not necessarily have to be represented by a woman. For Campbell, however, this step is about the revulsion that the usually male hero may feel about his own fleshy/earthy nature, and the subsequent attachment or projection of that revulsion to women. Woman is a metaphor for the physical or material temptations of life, since the hero-knight was often tempted by lust from his spiritual journey.

Questions to help frame this step
- Given this person's background and experience, what kinds of temptations make sense for him or her?
- Is this person on a spiritual journey, will he or she experience the temptations of the flesh?
- Are there habitual patterns of thought or behavior that serve to undermine, or tempt the person from his or her path?

step: 4. Atonement with the Father

brief description: In this step the person must confront and be initiated by whatever holds the ultimate power in his or her life. In many myths and stories this is the father, or a father figure who has life and death power. This is the center point of the journey. All the previous steps have been moving in to this place, all that follow will move out from it. Although this step is most frequently symbolized by an encounter with a male entity, it does not have to be a male; just someone or thing with incredible power. For the transformation to take place, the person as he or she has been must be "killed" so that the new self can come into being. Sometime this killing is literal, and the earthly journey for that character is either over or moves into a different realm.

Questions to help frame this step
- How does the person resolve him or herself with the sources of control and power in his or her life?
- What experiences mark the person as ready to take on the new roles of his or her transformed self?
- What behaviors, attitudes, relationships, dependencies, body parts, must be sacrificed to achieve this?
step: 5. Apotheosis

brief description: To apotheosize is to deify. When someone dies a physical death, or dies to the self to live in spirit, he or she moves beyond the pairs of opposites to a state of divine knowledge, love, compassion and bliss. This is a god-like state; the person is in heaven and beyond all strife. A more mundane way of looking at this step is that it is a period of rest, peace and fulfillment before the hero begins the return.

Questions to help frame this step
- Given this person's background and experience, what would heaven be for him or her?
- What does this person know or experience now that is beyond good and evil, male and female, life and death?
- Does the person give him or herself a moment to bask in the glow of what has been achieved?

step: 6. The Ultimate Boon

brief description: The ultimate boon is the achievement of the goal of the quest. It is what the person went on the journey to get. All the previous steps serve to prepare and purify the person for this step, since in many myths the boon is something transcendent like the elixir of life itself, or a plant that supplies immortality, or the Holy Grail.

Questions to help frame this step
- Given this person's background and experience, what would be the goal of his or her quest? What is the ultimate boon for this person?
- Was there a stated goal of the quest? If so has it changed? Has the person learned more or less than he or she expected?
- What are the rewards of this person's journey?
- What relationship does this person now have to his or her own immortality, gods, or god-like figures?

Third Stage: The Return

step: 1. Refusal of the Return

brief description: So why, when all has been achieved, the ambrosia has been drunk, and we have conversed with the gods, why come back to normal life with all its cares and woes?

Questions to help frame this step
- Does the person refuse to come back to everyday life?
- Is the person concerned that their message won't be heard, or that their gifts will be unappreciated, or that the wisdom gained can not be communicated?
step: 2. The Magic Flight
brief description: Sometimes the hero must escape with the boon, if it is something that the gods have been jealously guarding. It can be just as adventurous and dangerous returning from the journey as it was to go on it.

Questions to help frame this step
- Are there obstacles to the person's returning to normal life?
- Given this person's background and experience, what kind of obstacle would make sense or be especially difficult or suited to his or her situation?
- Will these obstacles further enlighten us about either the person, their quest, or their boon?

step: 3. Rescue from Without
brief description: Just as the hero may need guides and assistants to set out on the quest, oftentimes he or she must have powerful guides and rescuers to bring them back to everyday life, especially if the person has been wounded or weakened by the experience. Or perhaps the person doesn't realize that it is time to return, that they can return, or that others need their boon.

Questions to help frame this step
- Must the person be rescued from their journey?
- Can their original guides and assistants still help them?

step: 4. The Crossing of the Return Threshold
brief description: The trick in returning is to retain the wisdom gained on the quest, to integrate that wisdom into a human life, and then maybe figure out how to share the wisdom with the rest of the world. This is usually extremely difficult.

Questions to help frame this step
- What marks the person's return to normal life?
- What challenges does the person face in integrating the experience of the quest into his or her life?
- Can/does the person share his or her experiences and the wisdom gained from them with others?
- How do others receive the person upon the return?
step: 5. Master of the Two Worlds
brief description: In myth, this step is usually represented by a transcendental hero like Jesus or Buddha. For a human hero, it may mean achieving a balance between the material and spiritual. The person has become comfortable and competent in both the inner and outer worlds.

Questions to help frame this step

- Given this person's background and experience, what would represent the two worlds in his or her life?
- Does this person demonstrate his or her mastery of both the spiritual and material, the inner and outer worlds?

step: 6. Freedom to Live
brief description: Mastery leads to freedom from the fear of death, which in turn is the freedom to live. This is sometimes referred to as living in the moment, neither anticipating the future nor regretting the past.

Questions to help frame this step

- Does the person achieve the ability let go of the fear of death, to live in the moment, to neither anticipate the future nor regret the past?