

# South Kent School

## IV Form Summer Assignments

### The Hero's Journey: Introduction

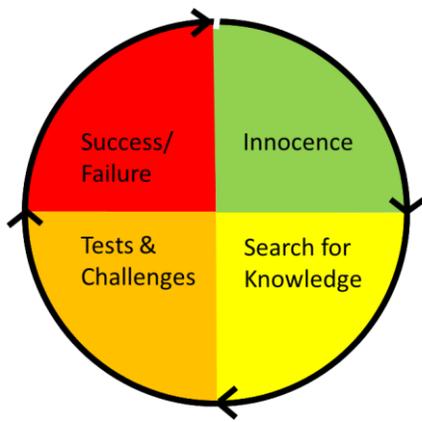
The hero's journey is a story of transformation, which typically includes the symbolic death and rebirth of the hero. The story begins with normal people leading their normal lives, but something happens that disrupts the status quo. A small group decides to take action. They set off to find a solution, and they face many tests and challenges along their path. At the end of the tale, they return home with some newfound wisdom or power. But how will they use it?

The concept of the hero's journey was developed by Joseph Campbell, a world renowned expert in comparative mythology and a professor at Sarah Lawrence College for thirty-eight years. In 1949, Campbell published his seminal work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. As the title suggests, this book includes countless examples of myths from around the world that all follow the same pattern – the hero's journey.

In the 1970s, a young filmmaker named George Lucas read Campbell's work and seized upon the simple but universal plot that he described. He used the hero's journey as the framework for his *Star Wars* series, and he credits Campbell with that inspiration. Other screenwriters quickly adopted the hero's journey formula, hoping to emulate the success of the *Star Wars* franchise, and this ancient pattern continues to echo through today's movies, books, and television shows.

This would not surprise Joseph Campbell, who frequently emphasized the psychological underpinnings of the hero's journey paradigm. The reason that myths are essentially the same in every culture, he argued, is because human beings all share basically the same psychology. We experience every day, year, and period of our lives in similar ways, regardless of race, language, and culture. After more than fifty years of studying the subject, he remained convinced that myths tell us how to live, how to be human, which is why the hero's journey remains relevant in our modern world.

Your summer assignments will help you to become more familiar with the hero's journey, which can be divided into four stages:



1. Innocence: The beginning where one starts the journey or quest, often characterized by innocence, lack of knowledge or experience.

2. Search for Knowledge: An event or some occurrence that triggers the search for knowledge, experience, truth, and/or faith, and the search that then follows.

3. A challenge that tests the knowledge, experience, truth, or faith that has been acquired as part of the journey.

4. A determination as to whether the individual succeeds or fails. Does the individual successfully meet this challenge and become a hero, or does the individual fail and either (a) engage in selfish exploitation of the knowledge and truth gained throughout the journey, or (b) give up?

After you've seen the hero's journey spelled out, it's easy to spot more examples. Almost every Harry Potter book begins with Harry at home before departing for a year in the special world of Hogwarts School and ends with him returning home for summer vacation. Think of the last book you read or the last movie you saw. Does it fit the hero's journey pattern?

South Kent School's educational philosophy is based upon the hero's journey. As you study the materials in this iTunesU course and complete the writing assignments, you will become fluent in this concept. When you arrive at South Kent in September, you will be ready to discuss the hero's journey as it applies to literature, to history, and to your own life.