

THE WRITER'S JOURNEY

MYTHIC STRUCTURE FOR WRITERS

THIRD EDITION

CHRISTOPHER VOGLER





"This book is like having the smartest person in the story meeting come home with you and whisper what to do in your ear as you write a screenplay. Insight for insight, step for step, Chris Vogler takes us through the process of connecting theme to story and making a script come alive."

— Lynda Obst, Producer,
How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days, Sleepless in Seattle, One Fine Day, Contact; Author, Hello, He Lied

"*The Writer's Journey* is an insightful and even inspirational guide to the craft of storytelling. An approach to structure that is fresh and contemporary, while respecting our roots in mythology."

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Producer, *Dreamscape, The Mask, Eraser*

"*The Writer's Journey* should be on anyone's bookshelf who cares about the art of storytelling at the movies. Not just some theoretical tome filled with development clichés of the day, this book offers sound and practical advice on how to construct a story that works."

— David Friendly, Producer, *Little Miss Sunshine, Daylight, Courage Under Fire, Out to Sea, My Girl*

"A classic of its kind full of insight and inspiration that every writer, both amateur and professional, must read."

— Richard D. Zanuck, The Zanuck Company
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Big Fish, Reign of Fire, Driving Miss Daisy, Cocoon, The Verdict, Sting

"The basis for a great movie is a great screenplay, and the basis for a great screenplay should be *The Writer's Journey*."

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"One of the most valuable tools in understanding and appreciating the structure of a plot that's available today. *The Writer's Journey* is an essential tool to any writer at any stage of their career."

— Debbie Macomber, Best-selling Author, *Montana*

"A valuable tool for any creative writer, *The Writer's Journey* is consistently among our top-selling books each month. Christopher Vogler's narrative helps writers construct well-developed characters that enrich their stories."

— The Writer's Computer Store

"There's not a better book to read if you want to write movies, or anything else for that matter. I keep it on my desk, always within reach, knowing that when I get lost — and I always do — I have somebody close by to help show me the way. Chris Vogler is a (bleep)ing genius."

— Scott Silver, Writer, *Eight Mile*

"*The Writer's Journey* provides both fiction and nonfiction writers with powerful tools and guidelines to create remarkable stories. It is the best book of its kind."

— John Tullius, Director, Maui Writers Conference
and Writer's Retreat

"This is a book about the stories we write, and perhaps more importantly, the stories we live. It is the most influential work I have yet encountered on the art, nature, and the very purpose of storytelling."

— Bruce Joel Rubin, Screenwriter,
Ghost, Jacob's Ladder

"This book should come with a warning: You're going to learn about more than just writing movies—you're going to learn about life! *The Writer's Journey* is the perfect manual for developing, pitching and writing stories with universal human themes that will forever captivate a global audience. It's the secret weapon I hope every writer finds out about."

— Jeff Arch, Screenwriter,
Sleepless in Seattle

"Vogler was the genius behind *The Writer's Journey*, which should be on the shelf of every screenwriter. Studies classical mythology and its use in moviemaking for stories."

— *Fade In Magazine* 1996 (From Article "The Top
100 People in Hollywood You Need to Know")

"The Katzenberg memo has joined the show-biz vernacular. But there's another, lesser-known Disney memo whose influence arguably exceeded Katzenberg's. This seven-page memo distills myth-master Joseph Campbell's storytelling theories into an algorithm for screenplays."

— *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, 1994

"The current industry bible ...

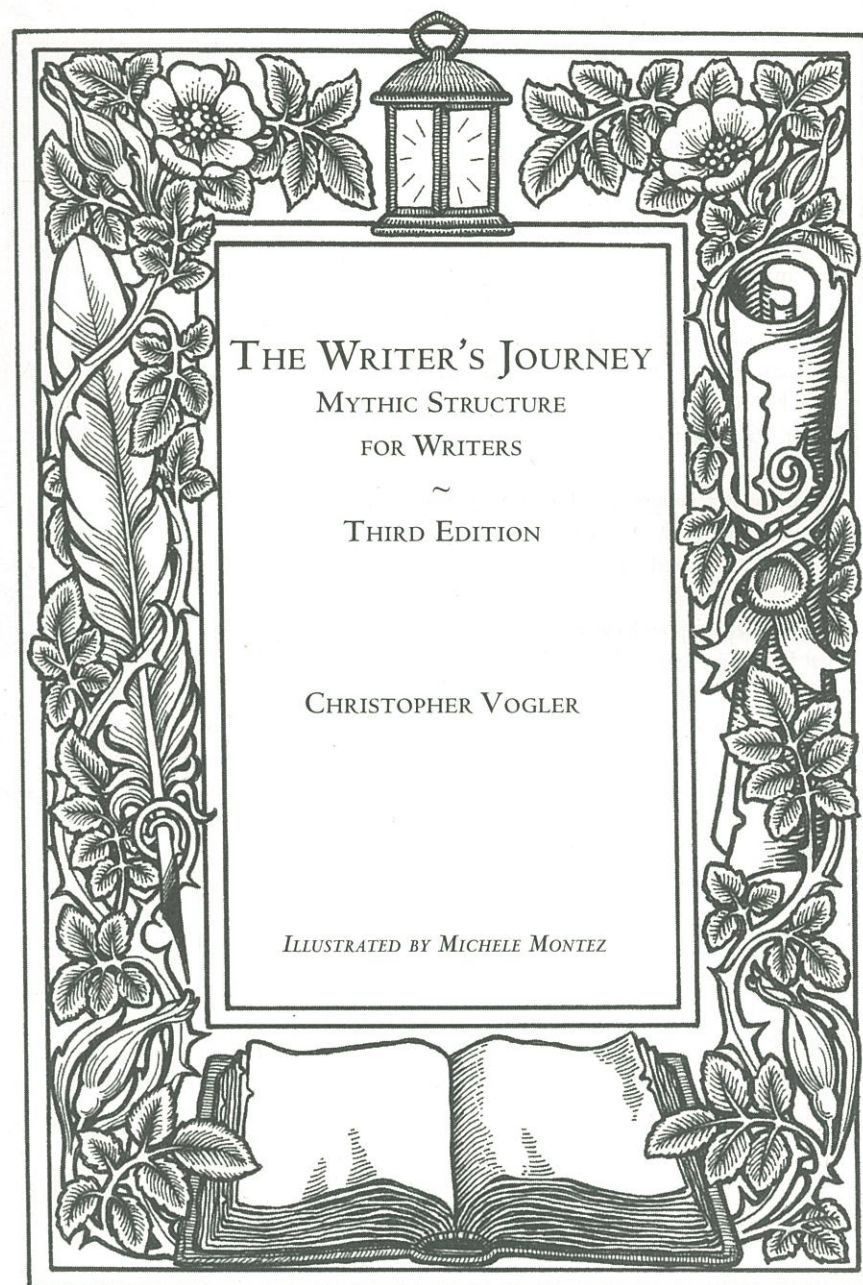
— *Spy Magazine*, Holiday Issue, 1997

"A seven-page memo by Christopher Vogler is now the stuff of Hollywood legend. ... The idea of a "mythic structure" has been quickly accepted by Hollywood, and Vogler's book now graces the bookshelves of many studio heads."

— *The London Times*, 1994

"I tell every story teller who asks, it all starts with this book. Vogler conjures up ancient tools and teaches readers how to wield them — unlocking solutions to every story problem."

— Darren Aronofsky, Director,
Pi, Requiem for a Dream, and The Fountain



THE WRITER'S JOURNEY ~ THIRD EDITION

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*for
Mom and Dad*



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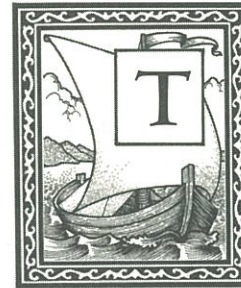


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INTRODUCTION

Third Edition



he waves are still rolling in from the pebbles in the pond that were the original *Writer's Journey* and its second edition. Since almost a decade has gone by since the second edition was launched, the ideas in that volume have been strenuously tested in a number of story-making laboratories around the world. Concepts I had developed as a story consultant for the Disney company and as a teacher of story construction have been through a fresh battery of challenges in the real world that I hope have made them stronger. The new chapters of this book will, I hope, reflect some of the ideas that have continued to evolve around the Hero's Journey concept. There are new chapters on the life force operating in stories, on the mechanism of polarity that rules in storytelling, on the wisdom of the body, catharsis, and other concepts that I have developed in recent years in my lectures and in practical work in Hollywood and in Europe. I have gathered together this new material near the end of the book, in an appendix following "Looking Back on the Journey."

In the nine years since the last edition, I have traveled widely, applied my ideas to writing, publishing, and producing projects of my own, and done a few more "tours of duty" as it were for major Hollywood studios. The first of these jobs, commencing just after the publishing of the second edition, was a four-year return to 20th Century Fox, where I had been a story analyst at the beginning of my career. This time around I was operating at a slightly higher level, as a development executive for the Fox 2000 feature film label, with more responsibility and pressure. I was involved in the research and development aspects of films like *Courage*

Under Fire, *Volcano*, *Anna and the King*, *Fight Club*, and *The Thin Red Line*. My concepts of storytelling, shaped by the patterns of mythology and the thinking of Joseph Campbell and Carl Jung, were now being tested not only on animated features but on big-budget, live-action movies for adult audiences.

The office atmosphere of Fox 2000 was a fascinating place to study the ways of power. In the past I had been aware of places like it, but as a story analyst I had not been inside those meeting rooms where the decisions were taken about the writers, the stories, and the movies made from them. Power flows in those rooms like hot lava, and until I worked at Fox 2000 I had only heard it rumbling. Now I was standing hip deep in it.

It was the most adult environment I had ever been in, run on unspoken but rigorous principles of personal responsibility. No whining allowed, no excuses. And the same fierce intensity was applied to the stories. Every concept, every comment, every suggestion had to pass the most stringent tests of common sense, logic, and show business instinct. I had the good fortune to work with some of the best story brains in the business, foremost among them being Fox 2000's founder Laura Ziskin, but also many talented executives, writers, directors, and producers. In this exacting laboratory I learned useful techniques for analyzing stories, ways of looking at characters and describing story situations that I hope will inform the new sections of this revised edition.

Among the things I learned at Fox 2000 was to listen to my body as a judge of a story's effectiveness. I realized that the good stories were affecting the organs of my body in various ways, and the really good ones were stimulating more than one organ. An effective story grabs your gut, tightens your throat, makes your heart race and your lungs pump, brings tears to your eyes or an explosion of laughter to your lips. If I wasn't getting some kind of physiological reaction from a story, I knew it was only affecting me on an intellectual level and therefore it would probably leave audiences cold. You will find my thoughts about this in a new chapter on the wisdom of the body.

When my job at Fox 2000 came to an end, as all good things must do, I wanted to write and produce some projects of my own. I soon found myself writing the screenplay for an animated feature, the result of a lecture trip to Munich. I was approached by producer Eberhard Junkersdorf to write the script for his version of the merry adventures of Till Eulenspiegel, Europe's favorite medieval clown. I knew

of Till's colorful character from stories I had read as a child and was delighted to take up the challenge. I enjoyed working with the energetic and charming Herr Junkersdorf and his international team of artists. Eberhard is so persuasive he even got me to contribute lyrics for two songs on the film's soundtrack, which really was a challenge. The film was released in Germany as *Till Eulenspiegel*, and I am hopeful it will be released in English one day under its English title, *Jester Till*. The experience taught me a multitude of lessons that I have tried to incorporate into the present edition.

Next up, I got involved as an executive producer of an independent feature, *P.S. Your Cat Is Dead*, actor/director/writer Steve Guttenberg's adaptation of the play and novel by James Kirkwood. This took me deep into the editing room for a period of months, another of the sacred temples of the movie business and for me, a place of intense joy. I loved sitting in the dark staring at images all day long and making the pictures dance. I called it going into the submarine, a blissful world of concentration that called on every cell of my creativity and forced me to articulate my ideas in order to communicate with my creative partners. I could see many ways in which the editing process echoes the writing process, and imagined new possibilities for combining the two. I learned new principles and gave the old theories a good workout.

The process of editing seemed to me to be a lot like making a wooden boat, like one of those sleek dragon-ships the Vikings made. The spine of the story is like the keel, the major plot points are the ribs, and the individual scenes and lines of dialogue are the planks and rigging that complete the vessel, a vehicle for your vision that you hope will sail on the seas of public attention.

Another insight from the editing room was a greater appreciation of the importance of focus. I realized that focused attention is one of the rarest things in the world, and that an audience is giving a lot when they devote their full attention to your work for two hours. There is only so much focus available in a given work, and it seems the more elements you take out of a composition, the more focus is poured into those that remain. Cutting lines, pauses, and entire scenes sharpened the focus on the elements that were left, as if a large number of diffuse spotlights had been concentrated into a few bright beams aimed at select important points.

P.S. Your Cat Is Dead enjoyed a brief theatrical run and then was distributed on DVD. After that adventure I concentrated for a time on traveling to give seminars for various international cinema and television training programs. Most recently I have

Christopher Vogler

gone back to the Hollywood studio world with a tour of duty at Paramount Pictures and a number of consulting jobs for other studios. I tried my hand at a new form, writing the first installment of *Ravenskull*, a story for a "manga," a highly stylized kind of comic book from Japan. This is a highly cinematic form, much like writing a screenplay and with a great deal of emphasis on the visual.

I hope something of what I have learned from collaborating with artists has found its way into this latest edition. It has been an intense pleasure to work with my artist friends Michele Montez and Fritz Springmeyer, whose illustrations provide the chapter headings in this volume.

And while I'm cataloguing the influences of recent years that inform the changes in the present volume, some of my most valuable time was spent walking the beach and thinking about why things are as they are and how they got to be that way. I tried to understand how the sun and stars move across the sky and how the moon got there. I saw that it's all waves, all of the Universe, just echoes and counter-echoes of the original cosmic sound, not the Big Bang, that's the wrong sound effect. It was more like a gong, that's it, the Great Gong, the original creative vibration that rolled out from a single pinpoint of concentration and unraveled and echoed and collided to create everything that is, and the Hero's Journey is part of that. I watch the sunsets march up and down the horizon, creating my own Stonehenge from the islands and ridge peaks that mark solstice and equinox, inviting me to puzzle out the place of stories and my own place in the story of everything. I hope you find your own place in that design. For those to whom the concept is new, bon voyage, and for those who are familiar with earlier versions, I hope you find some new surprises and connections in this work, and that it serves you on your own creative journeys.

Christopher Vogler

Venice, California

February 26, 2007

PREFACE

Second Edition

"I'm not trying to copy Nature. I'm trying to find the principles she's using."

— R. Buckminster Fuller

A book goes out like a wave rolling over the surface of the sea. Ideas radiate from the author's mind and collide with other minds, triggering new waves that return to the author. These generate further thoughts and emanations, and so it goes. The concepts described in *The Writer's Journey* have radiated and are now echoing back interesting challenges and criticisms as well as sympathetic vibrations. This is my report on the waves that have washed back over me from publication of the book, and on the new waves I send back in response.

In this book I described the set of concepts known as "The Hero's Journey," drawn from the depth psychology of Carl G. Jung and the mythic studies of Joseph Campbell. I tried to relate those ideas to contemporary storytelling, hoping to create a writer's guide to these valuable gifts from our innermost selves and our most distant past. I came looking for the design principles of storytelling, but on the road I found something more: a set of principles for living. I came to believe that the Hero's Journey is nothing less than a handbook for life, a complete instruction manual in the art of being human.

The Hero's Journey is not an invention, but an observation. It is a recognition of a beautiful design, a set of principles that govern the conduct of life and the world of storytelling the way physics and chemistry govern the physical world. It's difficult to avoid the sensation that the Hero's Journey exists somewhere, somehow, as an eternal reality, a Platonic ideal form, a divine model. From this model, infinite and highly varied copies can be produced, each resonating with the essential spirit of the form.

Pages have been omitted from this book preview.

Unlike the stories of heroes, which eventually come to an end, the journey to understand and articulate these ideas is truly endless. Although certain human conditions will never change, new situations are always arising, and the Hero's Journey will adapt to reflect them. New waves will roll out, and so it will go, on and on forever.

INTRODUCTION

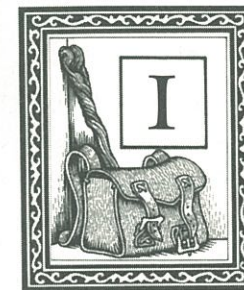
Second Edition

PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

"This is the tale I pray the divine Muse to unfold to us.

Begin it, goddess, at whatever point you will."

—The Odyssey of Homer



invite you to join me on a Writer's Journey, a mission of discovery to explore and map the elusive borderlands between myth and modern storytelling. We will be guided by a simple idea: **All stories consist of a few common structural elements found universally in myths, fairy tales, dreams, and movies.** They are known collectively as **The Hero's Journey.** Understanding these elements and their use in modern writing is the object of our quest. Used wisely, these ancient tools of the storyteller's craft still have tremendous power to heal our people and make the world a better place.

My own Writer's Journey begins with the peculiar power storytelling has always had over me. I got hooked on the fairy tales and Little Golden Books read out loud by my mother and grandmother. I devoured the cartoons and movies pouring out of TV in the 1950s, the thrilling adventures on the drive-in screens, the lurid comic books and mind-stretching science fiction of the day. When I was laid up with a sprained ankle, my father went to the local library and brought back wonder stories of Norse and Celtic mythology that made me forget the pain.

A trail of stories eventually led me to reading for a living as a story analyst for Hollywood studios. Though I evaluated thousands of novels and screenplays, I never got tired of exploring the labyrinth of story with its stunningly repeated patterns,

bewildering variants, and puzzling questions. Where do stories come from? How do they work? What do they tell us about ourselves? What do they mean? Why do we need them? How can we use them to improve the world?

Above all, how do storytellers manage to make the story mean something? Good stories make you feel you've been through a satisfying, complete experience. You've cried or laughed or both. You finish the story feeling you've learned something about life or about yourself. Perhaps you've picked up a new awareness, a new character or attitude to model your life on. How do storytellers manage to pull that off? What are the secrets of this ancient trade? What are its rules and design principles?

Over the years I began to notice some common elements in adventure stories and myths, certain intriguingly familiar characters, props, locations, and situations. I became vaguely aware there was a pattern or a template of some sort guiding the design of stories. I had some pieces of the puzzle but the overall plan eluded me.

Then at the USC film school I was fortunate enough to cross paths with the work of the mythologist Joseph Campbell. The encounter with Campbell was, for me and many other people, a life-changing experience. A few days of exploring the labyrinth of his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* produced an electrifying reorganization of my life and thinking. Here, fully explored, was the pattern I had been sensing. Campbell had broken the secret code of story. His work was like a flare suddenly illuminating a deeply shadowed landscape.

I worked with Campbell's idea of the Hero's Journey to understand the phenomenal repeat business of movies such as *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters*. People were going back to see these films as if seeking some kind of religious experience. It seemed to me these films drew people in this special way because they reflected the universally satisfying patterns Campbell found in myths. They had something people needed.

The Hero with a Thousand Faces was a lifesaver when I began to work as a story analyst for major movie studios. In my first jobs I was deeply grateful for Campbell's work, which became a reliable set of tools for diagnosing story problems and prescribing solutions. Without the guidance of Campbell and mythology, I would have been lost.

It seemed to me the Hero's Journey was exciting, useful story technology which could help filmmakers and executives eliminate some of the guesswork and expense of developing stories for film. Over the years, I ran into quite a few people who had

been affected by encounters with Joe Campbell. We were like a secret society of true believers, commonly putting our faith in "the power of myth."

Shortly after going to work as a story analyst for the Walt Disney Company, I wrote a seven-page memo called "A Practical Guide to *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*" in which I described the idea of the Hero's Journey, with examples from classic and current movies. I gave the memo to friends, colleagues, and several Disney executives to test and refine the ideas through their feedback. Gradually I expanded the "Practical Guide" into a longer essay and began teaching the material through a story analysis class at the UCLA Extension Writers' Program.

At writers' conferences around the country I tested the ideas in seminars with screenwriters, romance novelists, children's writers, and all kinds of storytellers. I found many others were exploring the intertwined pathways of myth, story, and psychology.

The Hero's Journey, I discovered, is more than just a description of the hidden patterns of mythology. It is a useful guide to life, especially the writer's life. In the perilous adventure of my own writing, I found the stages of the Hero's Journey showing up just as reliably and usefully as they did in books, myths, and movies. In my personal life, I was thankful to have this map to guide my quest and help me anticipate what was around the next bend.

The usefulness of the Hero's Journey as a guide to life was brought home forcefully when I first prepared to speak publicly about it in a large seminar at UCLA. A couple of weeks before the seminar two articles appeared in the Los Angeles *Herald-Examiner*, in which a film critic attacked filmmaker George Lucas and his movie *Willow*. Somehow the critic had got hold of the "Practical Guide" and claimed it had deeply influenced and corrupted Hollywood storytellers. The critic blamed the "Practical Guide" for every flop from *Ishtar* to *Howard the Duck*, as well as for the hit *Back to the Future*. According to him, lazy, illiterate studio executives, eager to find a quick-bucks formula, had seized upon the "Practical Guide" as a cure-all and were busily stuffing it down the throats of writers, stifling their creativity with a technology the executives hadn't bothered to understand.

While flattered that someone thought I had such a sweeping influence on the collective mind of Hollywood, I was also devastated. Here, on the threshold of a new phase of working with these ideas, I was shot down before I even started. Or so it seemed.

Friends who were more seasoned veterans in this war of ideas pointed out that in being challenged I was merely encountering an **archetype**, one of the familiar characters who people the landscape of the Hero's Journey, namely a **Threshold Guardian**.

That information instantly gave me my bearings and showed me how to handle the situation. Campbell had described how heroes often encounter these "unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces, some of which severely threaten" them. The Guardians seem to pop up at the various **thresholds** of the journey, the narrow and dangerous passages from one stage of life to the next. Campbell showed the many ways in which heroes can deal with Threshold Guardians. Instead of attacking these seemingly hostile powers head-on, journeyers learn to outwit them or join forces with them, absorbing their energy rather than being destroyed by it.

I realized that this Threshold Guardian's apparent attack was potentially a blessing, not a curse. I had thought of challenging the critic to a duel (laptops at twenty paces) but now reconsidered. With a slight change in attitude I could turn his hostility to my benefit. I contacted the critic and invited him to talk over our differences of opinion at the seminar. He accepted and joined a panel discussion which turned into a lively and entertaining debate, illuminating corners of the story world that I had never glimpsed before. The seminar was better and my ideas were stronger for being challenged. Instead of fighting my Threshold Guardian, I had absorbed him into my adventure. What had seemed like a lethal blow had turned into something useful and healthy. The mythological approach had proven its worth in life as well as story.

Around this time I realized the "Practical Guide" and Campbell's ideas *did* have an influence on Hollywood. I began to get requests from studio story departments for copies of the "Practical Guide". I heard that executives at other studios were giving the pamphlet to writers, directors, and producers as guides to universal, commercial story patterns. Apparently Hollywood was finding the Hero's Journey useful.

Meanwhile Joseph Campbell's ideas exploded into a wider sphere of awareness with the Bill Moyers interview show on PBS, *The Power of Myth*. The show was a hit, cutting across lines of age, politics, and religion to speak directly to people's spirits. The book version, a transcript of the interviews, was on the *New York Times* bestseller list for over a year. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell's venerable

warhorse of a textbook, suddenly became a hot bestseller after forty years of slow but steady backlist sales.

The PBS show brought Campbell's ideas to millions and illuminated the impact of his work on filmmakers such as George Lucas, John Boorman, Steven Spielberg, and George Miller. Suddenly I found a sharp increase in awareness and acceptance of Campbell's ideas in Hollywood. More executives and writers were versed in these concepts and interested in learning how to apply them to moviemaking and screenwriting.

The Hero's Journey model continued to serve me well. It got me through reading and evaluating over ten thousand screenplays for half a dozen studios. It was my atlas, a book of maps for my own writing journeys. It guided me to a new role in the Disney company, as a story consultant for the Feature Animation division at the time *The Little Mermaid* and *Beauty and the Beast* were being conceived. Campbell's ideas were of tremendous value as I researched and developed stories based on fairy tales, mythology, science fiction, comic books, and historical adventure.

Joseph Campbell died in 1987. I met him briefly a couple of times at seminars. He was still a striking man in his eighties, tall, vigorous, eloquent, funny, full of energy and enthusiasm, and utterly charming. Just before his passing, he told me, "Stick with this stuff. It'll take you a long way."

I recently discovered that for some time the "Practical Guide" has been required reading for Disney development executives. Daily requests for it, as well as countless letters and calls from novelists, screenwriters, producers, writers, and actors, indicate that the Hero's Journey ideas are being used and developed more than ever.

And so I come to the writing of this book, the descendant of the "Practical Guide." The book is designed somewhat on the model of the *I Ching*, with an introductory overview followed by commentaries that expand on the typical stages of the Hero's Journey. Book One, **Mapping the Journey**, is a quick survey of the territory. Chapter I is a revision of the "Practical Guide" and a concentrated presentation of the twelve-stage Hero's Journey. You might think of this as the map of a journey we are about to take together through the special world of story. Chapter 2 is an introduction to the archetypes, the *dramatis personae* of myth and story. It describes eight common character types or psychological functions found in all stories.

Book Two, *Stages of the Journey*, is a more detailed examination of the twelve elements of the Hero's Journey. Each chapter is followed by suggestions for your further exploration, *Questioning the Journey*. An Epilogue, *Looking Back on the Journey*, deals with the special adventure of the Writer's Journey and some pitfalls to avoid on the road. It includes Hero's Journey analyses of some influential films including *Titanic*, *Pulp Fiction*, *The Lion King*, *The Full Monty*, and *Star Wars*. In one case, *The Lion King*, I had the opportunity to apply the Hero's Journey ideas as a story consultant during the development process, and saw firsthand how useful these principles can be.

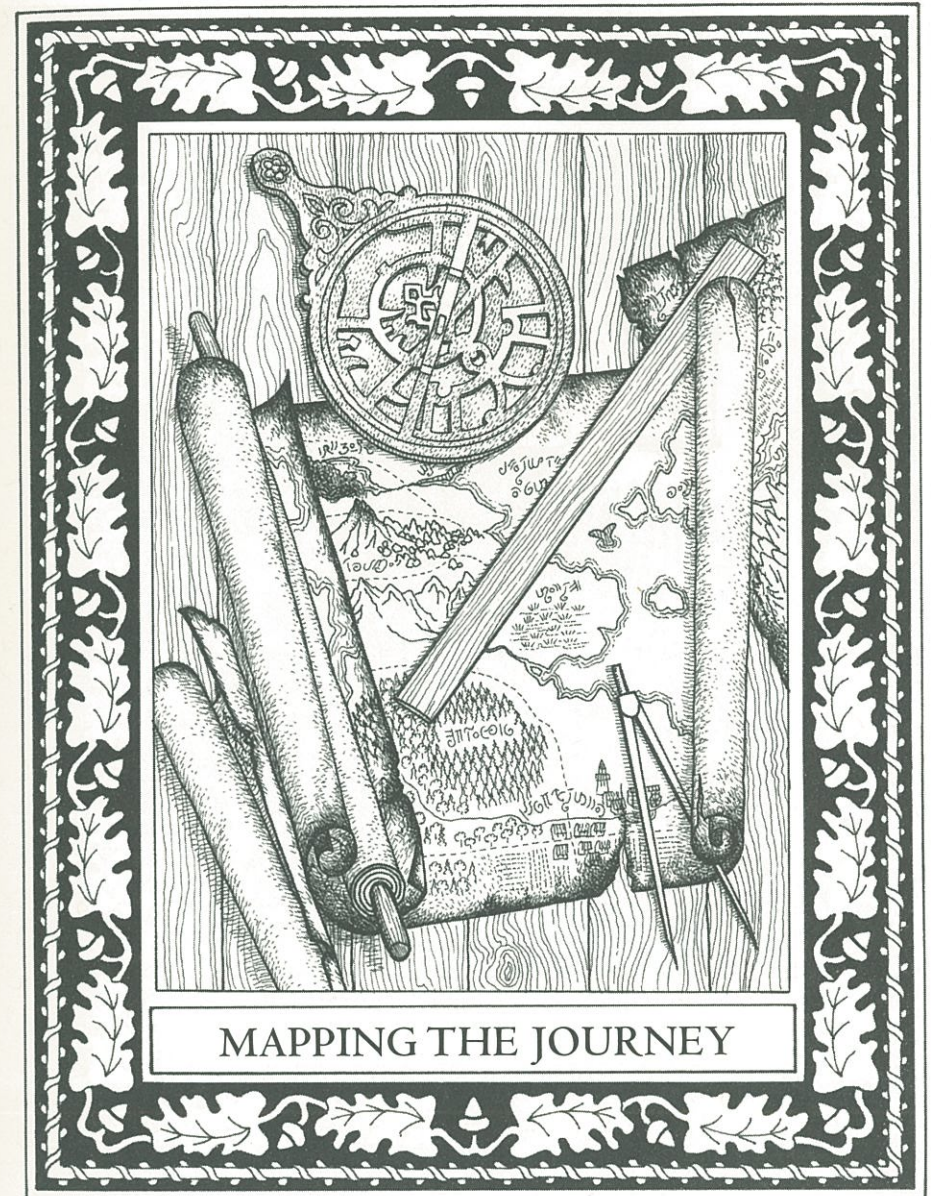
Throughout the book I make reference to movies, both classic and current. You might want to view some of these films to see how the Hero's Journey works in practice. A representative list of films appears in Appendix I.

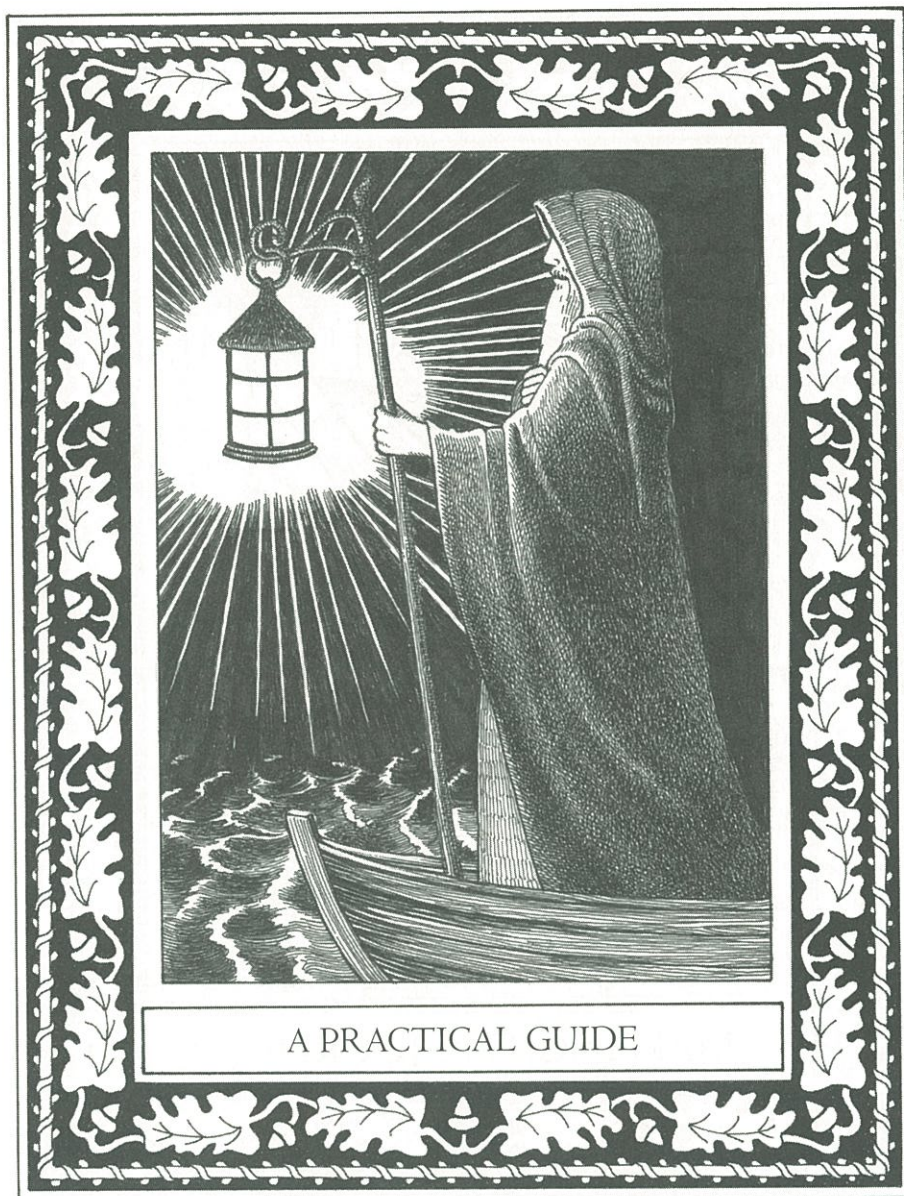
You might also select a single movie or story of your choice and keep it in mind as you take the Writer's Journey. Get to know the story of your choice by reading or viewing it several times, taking brief notes on what happens in each scene and how it functions in the drama. Running a movie on a VCR is ideal, because you can stop to write down the content of each scene while you grasp its meaning and relation to the rest of the story.

I suggest you go through this process with a story or movie and use it to test out the ideas in this book. See if your story reflects the stages and archetypes of the Hero's Journey. (A sample worksheet for the Hero's Journey can be found in Appendix 3.) Observe how the stages are adapted to meet the needs of the story or the particular culture for which the story was written. Challenge these ideas, test them in practice, adapt them to your needs, and make them yours. Use these concepts to challenge and inspire your own stories.

The Hero's Journey has served storytellers and their listeners since the very first stories were told, and it shows no signs of wearing out. Let's begin the Writer's Journey together to explore these ideas. I hope you find them useful as magic keys to the world of story and the labyrinth of life.

BOOK ONE:





A PRACTICAL GUIDE

"There are only two or three human stories, and they go on repeating themselves as fiercely as if they had never happened before."

—Willa Cather, in *O Pioneers!*



In the long run, one of the most influential books of the 20th century may turn out to be Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

The ideas expressed in Campbell's book are having a major impact on storytelling. Writers are becoming more aware of the ageless patterns which Campbell identifies, and are enriching their work with them.

Inevitably Hollywood has caught on to the usefulness of Campbell's work. Filmmakers like George Lucas and George Miller acknowledge their debt to Campbell and his influence can be seen in the films of Steven Spielberg, John Boorman, Francis Coppola, and others.

It's little wonder that Hollywood is beginning to embrace the ideas Campbell presents in his books. For the writer, producer, director, or designer his concepts are a welcome tool kit, stocked with sturdy instruments ideal for the craft of storytelling. With these tools you can construct a story to meet almost any situation, a story that will be dramatic, entertaining, and psychologically true. With this equipment you can diagnose the problems of almost any ailing plot line, and make the corrections to bring it to its peak of performance.

These tools have stood the test of time. They are older than the Pyramids, older than Stonehenge, older than the earliest cave paintings.

Joseph Campbell's contribution to the tool kit was to gather the ideas together, recognize them, articulate them, name them, organize them. He exposed for the first time the pattern that lies behind every story ever told.

The Hero with a Thousand Faces is his statement of the most persistent theme in oral tradition and recorded literature: the myth of the hero. In his study of world hero myths Campbell discovered that they are all basically the same story, retold endlessly in infinite variation.

He found that all storytelling, consciously or not, follows the ancient patterns of myth and that all stories, from the crudest jokes to the highest flights of literature, can be understood in terms of the Hero's Journey: the "monomyth" whose principles he lays out in the book.

The pattern of the Hero's Journey is universal, occurring in every culture, in every time. It is as infinitely varied as the human race itself and yet its basic form remains constant. The Hero's Journey is an incredibly tenacious set of elements that springs endlessly from the deepest reaches of the human mind; different in its details for every culture, but fundamentally the same.

Campbell's thinking runs parallel to that of the Swiss psychologist Carl G. Jung, who wrote about the **archetypes**: constantly repeating characters or energies which occur in the dreams of all people and the myths of all cultures. Jung suggested that these archetypes reflect different aspects of the human mind — that our personalities divide themselves into these characters to play out the drama of our lives. He noticed a strong correspondence between his patients' dream figures and the common archetypes of mythology. He suggested that both were coming from a deeper source, in the **collective unconscious** of the human race.

The repeating characters of world myth such as the young hero, the wise old man or woman, the shapeshifter, and the shadowy antagonist are the same as the figures who appear repeatedly in our dreams and fantasies. That's why myths and most stories constructed on the mythological model have the ring of psychological truth.

Such stories are accurate models of the workings of the human mind, true maps of the psyche. They are psychologically valid and emotionally realistic even when they portray fantastic, impossible, or unreal events.

This accounts for the universal power of such stories. Stories built on the model of the Hero's Journey have an appeal that can be felt by everyone, because they well up from a universal source in the shared unconscious and reflect universal concerns.

They deal with the childlike universal questions: Who am I? Where did I come from? Where will I go when I die? What is good and what is evil? What must I do about it? What will tomorrow be like? Where did yesterday go? Is there anybody else out there?

The ideas embedded in mythology and identified by Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* can be applied to understanding almost any human problem. They are a great key to life as well as a major instrument for dealing more effectively with a mass audience.

If you want to understand the ideas behind the Hero's Journey, there's no substitute for actually reading Campbell's work. It's an experience that has a way of changing people.

It's also a good idea to read a lot of myths, but reading Campbell's work amounts to the same thing since Campbell is a master storyteller who delights in illustrating his points with examples from the rich storehouse of mythology.

Campbell gives an outline of the Hero's Journey in Chapter IV, "The Keys," of *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. I've taken the liberty of amending the outline slightly, trying to reflect some of the common themes in movies with illustrations drawn from contemporary films and a few classics. You can compare the two outlines and terminology by examining Table One.

TABLE ONE

COMPARISON OF OUTLINES AND TERMINOLOGY

*The Writer's Journey**The Hero with a Thousand Faces*

ACT ONE

DEPARTURE, SEPARATION

Ordinary World

World of Common Day

Call to Adventure

Call to Adventure

Refusal of the Call

Refusal of the Call

Meeting with the Mentor

Supernatural Aid

Crossing the First Threshold

Crossing the First Threshold

Belly of the Whale

ACT TWO

DESCENT, INITIATION, PENETRATION

Tests, Allies, Enemies

Road of Trials

Approach to the Inmost Cave

Ordeal

Meeting with the Goddess

Woman as Temptress

Atonement with the Father

Apotheosis

Reward

The Ultimate Boon

ACT THREE

RETURN

The Road Back

Refusal of the Return

The Magic Flight

Rescue from Within

Crossing the Threshold

Return

Resurrection

Master of the Two Worlds

Return with the Elixir

Freedom to Live

I'm retelling the hero myth in my own way, and you should feel free to do the same. Every storyteller bends the mythic pattern to his or her own purpose or the needs of a particular culture.

That's why the hero has a thousand faces.

A note about the term "hero": As used here, the word, like "doctor" or "poet," may refer to a woman or a man.

THE HERO'S JOURNEY

At heart, despite its infinite variety, the hero's story is always a journey. A hero leaves her comfortable, ordinary surroundings to venture into a challenging, unfamiliar world. It may be an outward journey to an actual place: a labyrinth, forest or cave, a strange city or country, a new locale that becomes the arena for her conflict with antagonistic, challenging forces.

But there are as many stories that take the hero on an inward journey, one of the mind, the heart, the spirit. In any good story the hero grows and changes, making a journey from one way of being to the next: from despair to hope, weakness to strength, folly to wisdom, love to hate, and back again. It's these emotional journeys that hook an audience and make a story worth watching.

The stages of the Hero's Journey can be traced in all kinds of stories, not just those that feature "heroic" physical action and adventure. The protagonist of every story is the hero of a journey, even if the path leads only into his own mind or into the realm of relationships.

The way stations of the Hero's Journey emerge naturally even when the writer is unaware of them, but some knowledge of this most ancient guide to storytelling is useful in identifying problems and telling better stories. Consider these twelve stages as a map of the Hero's Journey, one of many ways to get from here to there, but one of the most flexible, durable and dependable.

Pages have been omitted from this book preview.

**International
best seller and
one of the most
influential writing
books in the
world!**

Christopher Vogler explores the powerful relationship between mythology and storytelling in his clear, concise style that's made this book required reading for movie executives, screenwriters, playwrights, fiction and non-fiction writers, scholars, and fans of pop culture all over the world.

Discover a set of useful myth-inspired storytelling paradigms like "The Hero's Journey," and step-by-step guidelines to plot and character development. Based on the work of Joseph Campbell, *The Writer's Journey* is a must for all writers interested in further developing their craft.

This updated and revised Third Edition provides new insights and observations from Vogler's ongoing work on mythology's influence on stories, movies, and man himself. In revealing new material, he explores key principles like polarity and catharsis, plus:

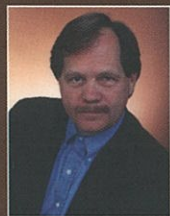
- A revised chapter which looks back at the *Star Wars* phenomenon and analyzes the six feature films as an epic on the theme of father-son relationships
- New illustrations and diagrams that give additional depth to the mythic principles
- A final chapter, "Trust the Path," an inspiring call to adventure for those who want to discover themselves through writing

"This book is like having the smartest person in the story meeting come home with you and whisper what to do in your ear as you write a screenplay. Insight for insight, step for step, Chris Vogler takes us through the process of connecting theme to story and making a script come alive."

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Christopher Vogler is a veteran story consultant for major Hollywood film companies and a respected teacher of filmmakers and writers around the globe. He has influenced the stories of movies from *The Lion King* to *Fight Club* to *The Thin Red Line*. He is the executive producer of the feature film, *P.S. Your Cat Is Dead*, and writer of the animated feature, *Jester Till*.



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