



VETERANS MISSION READY LEARNING COMMUNITY PRESENTS

ATTENTION STUDENT VETERANS, ACTIVE DUTY, RESERVISTS, AND FAMILY ENTER THE VETERANS DAY ESSAY CONTEST

First Place: \$500 Stipend

The deadline is midnight Monday, October 23, 2023

TOPIC: *How my military experiences mirror the stages of the Hero's Journey*

Target length: Approximately 3 – 4 pages, double-spaced

The Hero's Journey—as illustrated in Joseph Campbell's 1949 book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*—

illustrates how literature is filled with stories of protagonists who tend to follow a set of common steps during their adventure. Because literature reflects the human condition, people in all walks of life—including military veterans—also go through phases of the Hero's Journey. This contest offers an opportunity to explore and share how your own life has followed key steps of the Hero's Journey.

Expectations for well-written essays: Give your essay a title and include your name. Your introduction should state the purpose of your essay and refer to the Hero's Journey and to Joseph Campbell since the point of this essay is to compare your life to stages of the Hero's Journey. The title of Campbell's 1949 book is *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. The key stages are defined below.

As you write, do your best to bring alive the moments of your life that mirror the stages. Include occasional dialogue and descriptions of people and places. Be creative, but do not forget to refer to the stages of the Hero's Journey as you describe your life. In most cases, you will want to write a new paragraph for each stage, but it is acceptable to combine stages in a single paragraph if a moment represents two stages.

As you write, pay attention to punctuation and grammar. The target length is 3 – 4 pages, double-spaced, but feel free to write as much as needed to share your story. While the Hero's Journey has many stages, you do not need to address every stage. You should, however, at least address the *call to adventure*, *preparation*, *crossing the threshold*, *road of trials*, *allies*, *transformation*, and *the return*. Assume your reader is not familiar with the stages, so refer to each stage as you move through episodes in your life.

How to submit your essay: No later than midnight on Monday, October 23, email your essay in Word to Professor Jim Ott at jott@laspositascollege.edu. You may also email Dr. Ott with any questions between now and the deadline about this contest and your essay. If you are related to a service member, you may also enter the contest by writing about how your relative's life mirrors the stages of the journey. A panel of judges will read your essays and determine the recipients of the award.

Here are the definitions of the stages of the Hero's Journey.

Major Steps in the Hero's Journey

Be sure to address the first seven stages below and how your life reflects these stages. Additional stages are provided if you wish to include them.

Call to Adventure

The moment the hero is called on a quest is known as the "call to adventure." The hero may make a deliberate decision to start a journey, or the hero might not have a choice but to start.



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The Preparation

The hero typically prepares for the journey. His or her needs may be physical (for example training, getting supplies) or they may be knowledge-based, such as gathering information. Occasionally the preparation is psychological, such as gaining courage to go.

Crossing the Threshold

The hero begins his or her journey by crossing over into a new and unfamiliar world. Often the hero realizes that in this new place—the “underworld”—he or she must acquire new skills or knowledge to function well.

Allies

Individuals who assist the hero during the journey are known as allies. They may be acquired at any point during the journey and may be family members, friends, guides, animals, or even Gods.

Road of Trials

The hero faces a series of difficult experiences which test the courage, strength, intelligence, determination, and wisdom of the hero in the underworld. It may even seem that he or she has no hope or chance of getting out of a dangerous situation.

The Transformation

The hero is changing, now understanding the “underworld” around him or her and adapting accordingly. The transformation of the hero is sometimes physical, often mental, emotional, and spiritual.

The Return / Sharing the Gift

The hero returns to the “normal world” but now sees life differently because of the journey. The hero then shares the gift of experience, knowledge, and wisdom—gained through the journey—with the broader community.

Additional stages if you wish to include them:

Atonement of the Father

In this step the hero 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 often the center point of the journey. Although this step is most frequently symbolized by an encounter with a male entity, it does not have to be a male and can be someone or something with incredible power.

The Temptress

This step is about those temptations that may lead the hero to abandon or stray from his or her quest, which does not necessarily have to be represented by a woman.

The Saving Experience

Just when things are at their worst for the hero, he or she meets a special person, has a powerful experience, or receives a special gift that “saves” him or her, enabling the hero to achieve the journey’s goal.

The Ultimate Boon

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.