

# THE HERO'S JOURNEY

## **THE GREAT ADVENTURE**

- Primitive man knew life as a cycle: birth and childhood (dependency), adulthood (independence), and death (a return to the eternal). He also saw that life itself was an unending series of smaller cycles, challenges which we face and overcome if we are to grow. This awareness of life's cycles and their importance is reflected in the pattern of 'The Hero's Journey,' or Quest, which we see repeated again and again in mythology and literature.
- The Hero's Journey is similar to the primitive Rite of Passage, which initiates a child into adulthood. In a Rite of Passage, a child first faces separation, when he or she is taken from his or her mother to confront some fearful monster or danger. The child faces the monster, and goes through an initiation, giving up his or her role as a dependent child. Then the child must return to his or her village as an adult, ready to take on adult responsibilities.

## **BASIS OF THE JOURNEY**

- Like a rite of passage, the Hero's Journey requires a separation from the comfortable, known world; an initiation to a new level of awareness, skill and responsibility, and the return to the world.
- This pattern is not simply the invention of the ancient storytellers. It is part of the human process of growth and discovery. Myths are metaphors for this process. While you can see the Journey most easily in the classical myths, such as *The Odyssey*, you can also see it repeated in literature, movies, and— if you look carefully— in your own lives.
- The Journey can be divided into eight different stages. Each of these must be passed successfully if the initiate is to become a hero. To turn back at any point would mean our initiate is rejecting his own need to grow and mature.

**The following cycle is based on Joseph Campbell's *The Hero Within* and lists examples from the movie *Star Wars*:**

### **Separation from the Comfortable.**

The hero is separated from his old life. (Luke's aunt and uncle are killed.)

### **The Call.**

This goes with the separation. The call invites the hero into an adventure or to face the unknown. Often something is taken from the hero or he loses something of value. (The android delivers a message to Luke to rescue the princess.)

### **The Threshold of Adventure.**

This is the point at which the initiate leaves the known to plunge into the unknown. At this point, the hero will generally encounter a helper or guide. The guides usually appear at the most likely times. (Luke meets Obi-wan and learns about the Force.)

### **Tests and Ordeals.**

Throughout his ordeal, the initiate undergoes a series of tests and ordeals which challenge him to the utmost. This forces the hero to grow physically and mentally in order to prepare for the greater tasks ahead. Also at this point, the influence of a woman must be overcome. (Luke trains to become a Jedi Knight and hides his feelings for the princess.)

**Into the Abyss.**

When he reaches the Abyss, the initiate faces the greatest danger and challenge of the journey. Usually he must face the Abyss alone. (Luke uses the Force in his spaceship to defeat Darth Vader.)

**The Transformation.**

As the initiate meets the challenge of the Abyss and overcomes his fears, he is transformed. Frequently, the initiate receives special insight about his growth. (Luke listens to Obewan and becomes powerful with the Force.)

**The Atonement.**

After the transformation, the hero is now at one or at peace with his new self and has brought himself in harmony with the world. At this point he is generally given a reward or gift for his efforts. (Luke is rewarded by a medal and a kiss from the princess).

**The Return.**

After his transformation, the hero returns to his old life and gives his skills or learning back to humanity. (Luke chooses to work for the princess and starfighters.)