

THE CHANGE AGENT

Adult Education for
Social Justice: News,
Issues, and Ideas

TRANSITIONS

Transitions as a Hero's Journey 1-5
 The Hero's Journey
 Where on the Journey?

Getting an Education 6-22
 Overcoming Barriers
 Five Things You Can Do to Help Students Get to College
 Education Pays Math Activities
 Achieving an Education
 Remembrance
 Resources from the National College Transition Network
 Shake the Money Tree
 Let Your Voice Be Heard
 Take Action on Higher Education Reauthorization
 One Baby Step at a Time
 My Transition from Student to Staff

From Prison to Community 23-29
 Helping Students to Succeed
 Ex-convicts Keep on Paying Long After Release
 With the Love of a Woman
 Confronting Fear
 Past Drug Convictions Hamper Transition to College
 Gate Fever

Personal Transitions 30-35
 Trudging Through Transitions
 Wanting Change in Your Heart
 Only the Strong Can Survive
 A Baby Changes Everything
 The Road to Recovery

Coming to the United States 36-47
 Making a U-turn
 How do Americans View Immigrants?
 The "Somali Invasion"
 Classroom Activity for "Somali Invasion"
 Surviving in America
 Tracking Illegal Immigrants
 America's Disappeared: The Story of Noor Husain Raza

Making a Living 48-54
 Starting Over: Life After Downsizing
 Global Shifts Raising Issues of Income Equality
 A Better Life for Me and My Family
 Getting Credit for Learning
 The Final Countdown

Federal Budget Alert 55

The Hero's Journey

Life's Great Adventure

by Reg Harris

We could view every transition in our lives as a Hero's Journey: every love found, every love lost,

every birth or death, every move to a new job, school, or city. Some of us were introduced to the Heroic Journey through mythology. Others know the heroes of movies, books, and comics. Heroes take great journeys: to slay Medusa, to fight Darth Vader, to find their way home from Oz. But the Hero's Journey isn't just a pattern in myth or movie. It's the pattern of human experience that makes up our lives.

Understanding the three stages in the Journey pattern, along with the steps that make them up, can help us understand the flow of our own experience and be better able to make decisions and

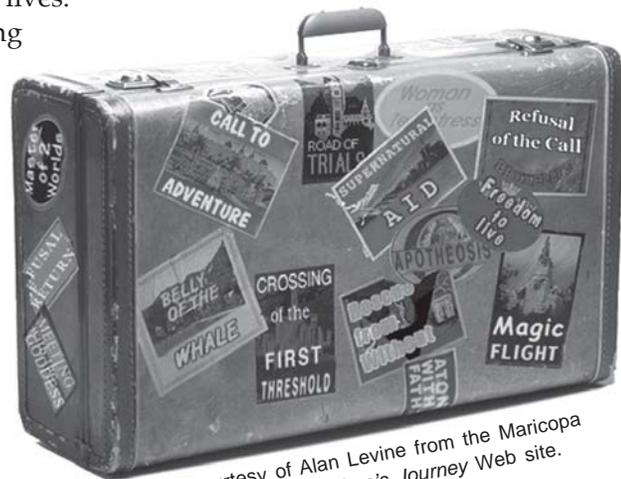


Image courtesy of Alan Levine from the Maricopa Community College's Hero's Journey Web site.

Continued on page 3

Continued from page 1

solve problems. More importantly, we will begin to recognize our own points of passage and respect how important they are for us.

STAGE 1: The Separation

The Call

The Call invites us to the journey. We may choose willingly to follow The Call, or we may be dragged into it. It might come as a sudden, often traumatic change in our lives. Or, it can come gradually as a growing sense of unhappiness. We might feel that we have outgrown the roles we are playing or the environment in which we live. Sometimes we hear The Call but ignore it. When we follow it, our journey begins.

The Threshold

Once we accept The Call, we must pass over the Threshold. The Threshold is the doorway between the world we know and are comfortable in, and the unknown. Fears and doubts that we have can block us from crossing the Threshold. Negative beliefs or harmful behavior patterns can also keep us from taking this step. These blocks and resistances are called the "threshold guardians."

Sometimes our fears protect us by preventing us from taking a journey that we're not ready for. But when we are ready, we find the way past the fear. When we do this we make a commitment to our journey. We say, "I'm ready. I can do this."

This is also the time when we might meet helpers. Helpers give us direction, support, and encouragement to continue on our path. The most important of these helpers is the mentor or guide who keeps us focused on our goal and gives us stability. Helpers and guides tend to appear throughout the journey when we need them the most.

STAGE 2: The Initiation

The Challenges

Once past the Threshold, we begin the journey into the unknown. We face a lot of challenges along the way. In the beginning, they might be easy to overcome. This helps us gain confidence. But, as we go on, the challenges get harder. They test our commitment and strength.

We learn who to trust to help us on our journey. There are often people that we meet who seem like helpers, but who use our own fears and

doubts to use us and to pull us away from our path. We must rely on our intuition and the advice of our mentor

to help us recognize true helpers.

The challenges we face force us to confront our greatest weakness: our poorest skill, our shakiest knowledge, our most vulnerable emotions. If we can't, the journey ends and we must turn back.

Into the Abyss

When we reach the Abyss, we face the greatest challenge of the journey. Here, we must face our greatest fear, and we must face it alone. Here is where we must "slay the dragon," which often takes the shape of something we dread, or have repressed, or need to resolve.

It is the most frightening time in the transition because we have left behind the old structure of our lives and a new structure has not yet taken its place. The old habits we have, the old ways we know to do things don't work anymore.

The upside is that we are free of the old structure, with its assumptions, expectations, and limits. We can now consider a whole new range of options and opportunities. As a result, even

Even though it is the "darkest hour" of the journey, and the point we fear most, the Abyss is the point where transition can occur.

Transitions as a Hero's Journey

though it is the “darkest hour” of the journey, and the point we fear most, the Abyss is the point where transition can occur. We can stop being what we were and start becoming what we are. We may find the challenge is too great and that we must turn back. Unless we set off to try again, our life won't be what it could have been.

Transformation and Revelation

As we pass beyond the Abyss and overcome our fears, we are changed. The final step in the process is a moment of death and rebirth: a part of

The final step in the process is a moment of death and rebirth: a part of us dies so that a new part can be born.

us dies so that a new part can be born. Fear must die to make way for courage. Ignorance must die for the birth of enlightenment. Dependency and irre-

sponsibility must die so that independence and power can grow.

Part of the Transformation process is a Revelation, a sudden, dramatic change in the way we think or see our life. This change in thinking is crucial because it makes us truly a different person.

The Atonement

After we have been transformed, we go on to achieve Atonement, that is we are “at-one” with our new self. We have incorporated the changes caused by the Journey and we are fully “reborn.” In a spiritual sense, the Transformation has brought us into harmony with life and the world. The imbalance that sent us on the journey has been corrected — until the next call.

STAGE 3: The Return

After Transformation and Atonement, we face the final stage of our journey: our return to everyday life. We discover our gift, and want to

share it with the world. Sometimes, however, things don't go smoothly. For example, we might lose our new understanding if we put ourselves back in the same situation or environment we left earlier.

The Journey is a Map

The Journey is the pattern that we follow in our lives as we face challenges and go through life changes. If we understand the Journey pattern, we will be better able to face difficulties that invariably come and to use our experiences to become stronger and more capable. Understanding the Journeys we each make can help us achieve wisdom, growth, and independence, and become the people we want to be.

*Reg Harris has 29 years experience teaching English in California secondary schools and currently teaches at Vintage High School in Napa. He is the co-author of *The Hero's Journey: A Guide to Literature and Life*.*

Adapted from the original version by Angela Orlando with permission from Reg Harris. To read the complete version, go to www.yourheroicjourney.com/Journey.shtml.

Why is it called the Hero's Journey?

Joseph Campbell, a great thinker and teacher, found that in cultures all over the world, stories about heroes had common stages illustrating what the hero goes through on his or her quest. He called this the Hero's Journey.

Classroom activities related to the Hero's Journey can be found on Maricopa Community College's *Hero's Journey* Web site. This site provides a free and open environment for learning the classic mythical story structure and where anyone can write original stories or analyze classic ones that follow this structure. www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/smc/journey/index.html