1. What lead to JC’s interest in comparative mythology?

As a young man JC traveled regularly to the Natural History Museum in NYC. He became fascinated with Native American culture and began to study Native American mythology. He also grew up Catholic and had a fascination with the mystical element of life and the prospect of studying Christianity as well as other religions.

1. How did JC become the world’s foremost scholar on mythology? How did the Great Depression benefit his education?

Joseph Campbell isolated himself for years and studied many languages including Sanskrit which is known to the be the great “spiritual language” of the world. He was able to do this more easily during the 1930’s and 40’s because prices for room and board were lower and he was thereby able to focus on his reading without having to pay a huge amount of overhead. He did not pursue a doctorate but he used his graduate degree to eventually land a place as a professor at Sarah Lawrence University.

By comparing all of the stories of different cultures he found recurring archetypes. He also created a formula for the story of the hero that appears in all cultures. His connection to Carl Jung (whom he met while in Europe) emphasized the richness of the unconscious which he designated as the source of all mythology.

1. What is considered to be JC’s most important teaching?

First and foremost, his formula for the hero journey is important. Secondly, he coined the term “follow your bliss”. He believed a vital person could vitalize the world but the dilemma is that you can’t be a vital person unless you strive to be happy and find your life force. He believed that if a person followed their bliss they would enter a track that was set out for them all along and that “there would be doors where once there were only walls”.

1. What is the primary factor that decides what types of stories a storyteller will tell? What are story tellers a “product of”?

Story tellers are a product of our culture and our cultural narrative which is already woven together with various media and art forms. Story tellers can generally only write what they know. If someone hasn’t led a rich and thoughtful life that might be reflected in the quality of the stories they tell. I heard a quote once that I really liked and it goes something like “you can only meet others as deeply as you have met yourself.” The connection with the audience is only going to be as deep as your own psychological depths and the internal richness of the storyteller’s language.

1. Describe why myths are important. What are “stories” in the context of this chapter?

Myths have endured (especially Christian and Greek and Egyptian) throughout the ages because they strike chords within all of us because we are all a member of the human race and we have the same hardwired emotional responses to different imagery.

In the context of this chapter, stories relate to the “monomyth” or the Hero’s Journey. Stories have a beginning and middle and end and ultimately the hero is supposed to undergo a certain formula of transformations. These transformations are the result of different quests and trials. The evolution of the hero is supposed to be a revelation for the collective audience so that they might experience a catharsis as well as activate some sort of sense of inspiration about life and the human condition.

1. Explain how you will discover your own myths.

Joseph Campbell says “myths are public dreams and dreams are private myths. I believe writing down dreams regularly can be a great way to collect good motifs and compelling stories. There are sometimes in a person’s lifetime “big dreams”. Carl Jung said that “big dreams” only happen infrequently and these big dreams begin to bridge the gap between the personal life of an individual and the collective experience. Big dreams often speak to us with universal archetypes.

1. Why is it important to try to understand the history of your art?

There are patterns of innovation that appear in all technologies. Film is so dependent on various technologies that it’s important to understand how they have developed so that we can understand where they are going or where they COULD go with the intent of innovation. By studying historical trends such as the audience reaction to the introduction of sound, we have a frame of reference for how people collectively respond to change.

 Knowing the history of stories and specifically your genre that you are striving to immerse yourself in is crucial to being relevant and engaging.

1. Describe the difference between the “anti hero” and “anti villain”.

Anti heroes are usually mal-adjusted loners with glaring flaws who are pulled into the role of protagonist/hero out of desperation because circumstances force them to act.

Anti-Villains are antagonists or even versions of the anti-hero who may evoke some sympathy from the audience despite their actions. They are not always blatantly evil but they achieve their goals in ways that lack compassion or morality.

There is a grey area where anti-villain and anti hero share some qualities.

1. As a story teller following countless other storytellers before you how do you plan on keeping your stories FRESH and UNIQUE? How do you achieve freedom from the Monomyth?

The monomyth or “the Hero’s Journey” is something that I have been studying since I discovered Joseph Campbell in 2006. I honestly don’t know how to keep my stories fresh and unique because it’s pretty well-established that there are only a limited number of stories in human history but they are re-told in different ways.

I think that I am the only person I know who has certain convictions derived from unique experiences. I derive a lot of inspiration from night time dreams as well as “trips”. The unique thing about describing a trip or telling the story of a trip visually is that most people don’t remember the details of the trips they have had. If you can bring back those memories after having meaningful experiences and somehow preserve them in visual format with the help of lighting and special lenses, you can communicate to people who might find it meaningful to remember their own experiences which your visual language can evoke. This is fresh and this isn’t done regularly in the way that I envision it to be done.

1. Explain what you think is the best way to utilize the hero’s journey without it becoming stale and predictable.

Like I said all of the stories have already been told. My story (or the one that I’d like to focus on) falls under categories that have already been established such as the “fire theft” of Prometheus. There are many stories where the “great elixir” is found after many trials and tribulations. In my case, no one believes that the great elixir is anything worth pondering and there’s no way to gain any collective support of it unless I were to produce a visually compelling film. This effort on my part to validate the psychedelic experience is fresh and is not in any way stale or predictable because we are in a world in which it is illegal and we have yet to see what the outcome will be if people were to fight to make it legal. Any efforts to legalize psilocybin have failed.

1. What separates story tellers from those who want to “play storyteller? What is the most important trait you have to achieve your goals?

Story tellers in a casual sense relate stories that relate to more provincial issues within a town or a region. Playing story teller may mean gossip about the local events and telling a story for the sake of getting a rise out of people. Story tellers in a larger sense are people who can tap into something that goes beyond the local and temporal fads and into a timeless and universally relevant theme. Maybe in my case they really do feel that they have meaningful things to say about the culture we live in and the state of humanity.

I think that the most valuable trait that I have is that I have vivid dreams at night that help me tap into a different realm of the spirit and the deeper psychology of being alive. I’m not someone who is comfortable talking about the weather. I like talking about heavy shit.