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Chapter 3 Quiz

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

Joseph Campbell is quite a prolific figure in the world of myth and storytelling. As a curious, wide-eyed boy, Joseph’s life was forever changed by a seemingly innocent occurrence. The fateful event that led to his genius was a simple visit to The Natural History Museum. While there, he was especially fascinated with the Native American cultural exhibits. These exhibits spurred a lifelong quest to gain knowledge and understanding of the culture-specific aspects of storytelling.

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

Although Joseph didn’t pursue storytelling in college, he tried to rekindle his love of mythic storytelling in graduate school. Due to his request to study Sanskrit and Medieval Literature being denied, Joseph took matters into his own hands and dropped out. Not long after, The Great Depression began.

This period of time allowed him to do the work necessary to gain notoriety within the academic world. From a dilapidated shack, Joseph began his comparative studies. Entering into a rigorous reading regimen, 9 hours a day, he spent five years studying and analyzing stories represented by every culture ever in existence. As a result of his comparative work, Joseph published *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*; the culmination of his findings.

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

Despite his contributions as a whole, Joseph pinpointed one aspect of his work that he believed to be the most important. This idea, the notion of “following your bliss,” refers to a sort of unperceived destiny tailored to us individually. That is, by finding and following what makes us truly happy, our path becomes clearer and our lives better. Similarly, he believed that like-minded people would gravitate towards a singular “bliss”, thus presenting opportunities that may not have otherwise been present. In essence, if something is meant to be then everything will fall into place.

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

We as humans are a culmination of our experiences; both learned and not. Because of this, we are forced to think and create in certain terms. These terms, our individual artistic expressions, are influenced by a great many things. While there are many other variables to include, culture, race, religion, class, location, generation, etc. are the most important factors when it comes to what kinds of stories we write or identify with; culture being the most important. The combination of these different factors is what makes us unique. Although people may seem to think similarly, it is a fact that no two people think alike. Due to the repetitive structure of storytelling, it is the writer’s obligation, through creative twists and engaging characters, to lull their audience into a state of unknowing.

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

Mythology has been a vital part of culture since the creation of mankind. While some of these mythic stories have been recorded, others have been passed orally from one generation to another. These stories have endured because of the feelings they evoke in the people that hear them. There is a common thread of human emotion within each. These feelings, some of hope, pride, and bravery, and others of loss, sorrow, and travail, resonates with people from all cultures. The relatability of these messages is what makes them stick with us. And the morals they teach help us to face the world.

Joseph Campbell described myths as “public dreams”. These “dreams” translate into stories and, as a result, writers become the mythmakers. The tales or myths that writers weave are a collective of their dreams; eternally influenced by the mythmakers of yester year.

1. Explain how you will discover your own myths.

Because bringing a myth to life in film form can be a very tedious task, it is beneficial to the mythmaker to first understand the history of cinema. This first step can assist with, what some regard as the hardest step in the process, the question of what to write about. You start with picking the genre you wish to explore. Or, if this aspect is still unknown to you, you should examine the movies that have resonated with you the most. Analyzing why, and in what capacity, the themes, ideas, or characters impacted your life or changed your thought process can assist you in picking a topic that will have the same effect on others. It is very important, after picking a genre, that you understand everything about its history. A genre’s history can be manifested in many forms, such as films, books, paintings, sculptures, photos, etc.

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

In any case, knowing the history of something is quite beneficial. One may think of the old adage describing the repetitive nature of history; usually referring to the worst possible scenario. For screenwriting and storytelling in general, this works both ways. By studying the history of what works and what doesn’t, you are more adept at identifying the success rate of your project. This, in turn, will help in your approach and allow for more educated decision making practices to occur. This same notion should ring true for every project, film related or otherwise; it’s just good sense.

1. Describe the difference between an antihero and an antivillain.

As with most things in life, there are exceptions to standardized rules. The relatable saying that not everything can be seen in black and white is a viable belief. Characters in stories are not exempt from this notion. Take for instance, the antihero and the antivillain. Both are neither hero nor villain but a mixture of the two. Despite this orientation, they do somewhat differ. An antihero’s motivations for performing misdeeds, including murder and robbery, are often forgiven by the audience due to the desperate and solitary nature of the character. He or she is generally the one the viewer roots for, understands, and in some cases, even wishes to be. Antiheros can be merciless and even evil, but they forced into situations that make them act in these seemingly horrific ways.

It is no lie that both characters are complex and multi-layered, however, antivillians seem to be more so because they are constantly at odds with the nature of their humanity. That is, while they are the opposing force in a story, they are also hero-like in their sensibilities. They have their own ideologies, fears, and insecurities, but these are only put forth during times of emotional toil. Antivillians often wish they were someone else or that they could escape from their current situation. The viewer sympathizes with them also because they see both the good and the bad, though not in equal amount, and can identify with their contradictory nature.

1. As a storyteller, 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?”

Before I write anything, I ask myself several questions. Is it interesting to a majority of people? Has this idea or concept been done before? If so, how long ago, how successful was it, and how can I make it different? I never seek to tell the same story and am constantly analyzing and comparing my ideas or stories to what’s been done previously. Creativity and innovation is what I strive for in everything I do. New, fresh perspectives and untold stories are my focus. Even considering the concepts within the monomyth structure, I find it pretty easy to be original, especially because that’s what I pride myself on.

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

I think it really depends on the story. Typically, when I write a story, I let it lead me where it wants to go. I see the story itself as the driving force and I’m simply the literary vehicle. Granted, sometimes I have to take charge if I think the story would be best going down another path, but, for the most part, it controls me. Some stories should follow the traditional structure and others should turn it on end. It’s up to the writer to decide how the story should best be told or the message related. For example, if the story is modern and has no magical or mythological aspects, than it should follow the standard structure. If it has elements of fantasy, adventure, danger, etc. it should have a structure to reflect its unconventional nature. In other words, the contents of the story or the genre should reflect the order of the structure. Obviously, there are exceptions to my opinion as well.

1. What separates real storytellers from those who just want to play storyteller? What is the most important trait you must possess to achieve your goals?

In the film industry, there are many things that make people successful. Some of which include talent and the drive to do whatever it takes to bring your ideas to life. One key components of this is creative discipline. Discipline in itself is very important to achieving any goal. In this instance, thinking about writing a book or screenplay is not enough. You must work on your manuscript as much as possible every day. For some, every waking minute is possible, but for others this is not a reality. Regardless of the circumstances, if one is serious about making it in any creative field, the utmost attention should be given to the project and constant discipline made a priority.