

Sky Legends Teaching Resource

Ages: 10–18 (Grades 5–12)

Materials needed:

- Paper
- Pencil
- Crayons/markers/colored pencils
- Stapler, paperclips, or something to secure pages together

Duration: 1–1.5 hours (includes two activities)

Essential questions:

- What is a myth? What is the connection between myths and the night sky?
- What comparisons can be drawn between the myths of different cultures and/or the plots of popular fantasy books, movies, or TV series?
- What are the main components of the hero's journey monomyth? How do you structure a story?
- What are some common characteristics of heroes?



Part 1: Introduction

Myths are present in most cultures and are used primarily to detail the early history of a people or to explain natural phenomena. Myths typically involve **supernatural** beings or events. Myths have often been connected to the nighttime sky, with **constellations** used to memorialize the stories in the stars. While many ancient and contemporary cultures have myths and accompanying constellations, the stories of Ancient Greece are the most well-known.

Many Greek myths follow a story structure known as the **monomyth**, or the **hero's journey**. The concept of the hero's journey was developed by writer and professor Joseph Campbell (1904–1987). Typically, the **hero/heroine** encounters a problem or call to action, embarks on a journey, meets challenges, and then achieves resolution. Along the way, the hero undergoes character development, often as a result of going through or overcoming these personal challenges. Differing from a more typical **linear story structure** that has an explicit beginning, middle, and end, the **hero's journey** story structure is a cycle. The hero experiences continued calls to action throughout their life, and as a result experiences a process of growth and development over time.

The figure of the hero is often complicated. There can be **ambiguity** over whether the hero is the “good girl/guy” or the “bad girl/guy” as they encounter **moral** complications over the course of their journey. The hero may perform actions that can be interpreted as both “good” and “bad;” they may do things that are “bad” for the purpose of achieving the greater goal of “good;” or the hero may define a “good” action differently from the norm.

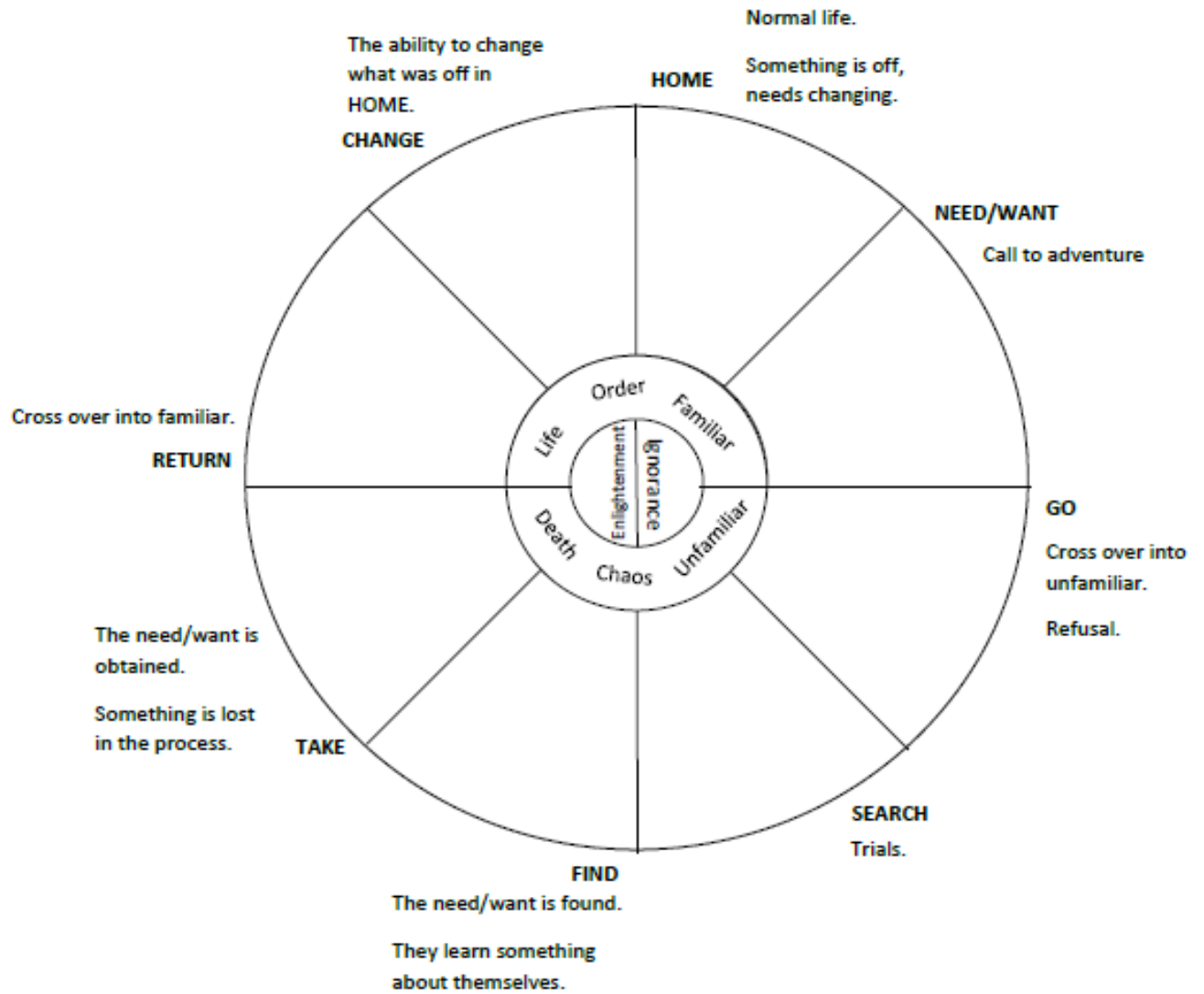
Consider some common examples of the hero's journey in contemporary art and literature.

Watch

- ["The Hero's Journey in 5 Minutes"](#)

Discuss

- What general similarities in plot structure can you identify among different movies, books, and TV series?
- What general similarities can you identify in the traits of main characters from different popular stories or movies?



Part 2: Story Mapping (Activity 1)

Duration: 30–45 minutes

Materials needed:

- Paper
- Pencil
- Crayons/markers/colored pencils
- Stapler, paperclips, or something to secure pages together

Procedure:

1. Take some time to brainstorm about some stories that you enjoy. These can be from a movie, a book, or a myth that you know.
2. Think about the hero/heroine in the story. What are some of the characteristics of the hero? If the hero undergoes personal development, what sparked the development? Were there specific events that caused a change in the hero? Were there subsidiary characters that assisted in the hero's development? Were there certain actions that the hero performed to signal their personal change?
3. Using the same sample story, think about the structure. Did the hero's journey follow the common structure of a **call to action**, embarkation on a journey, experience of a challenge or challenges, and then resolution? Did this character experience supernatural events, resistance, or support? Did this character change as a person over the course of their journey or the story's plot? If not, what was the story structure? Can you experiment with how this story structure would look as a diagram?
4. Think about some ideas that you want to explore in your story. You can expand on an existing character and write a new adventure for an well-known hero, such as Harry Potter, or you can create an entirely new character. Using the worksheet below, flesh out the story structure and character development of your hero.

Worksheet: Story Mapping

What is your hero's name and age?

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Appearance?

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Special talents?

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Background?

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Who are the other characters in your story?

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What is your hero's relationship to the other characters?

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How or why does your hero, animal, or object end up in the night sky?

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What is the problem or cause of the journey? Why does your hero decide to go on their journey?

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What obstacles or challenges will this character have to face?

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What, if any, type of personal development does your hero go through?

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What is the resolution of your story?

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Is there a moral lesson that you want the reader to learn?

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Part 3: Envisioning Your Own Hero's Journey (Activity 2)

Duration: 30–45 minutes

Materials needed:

- Paper
- Pencil or pen
- Crayons/markers/colored pencils
- Stapler, paperclip, or something to secure pages together

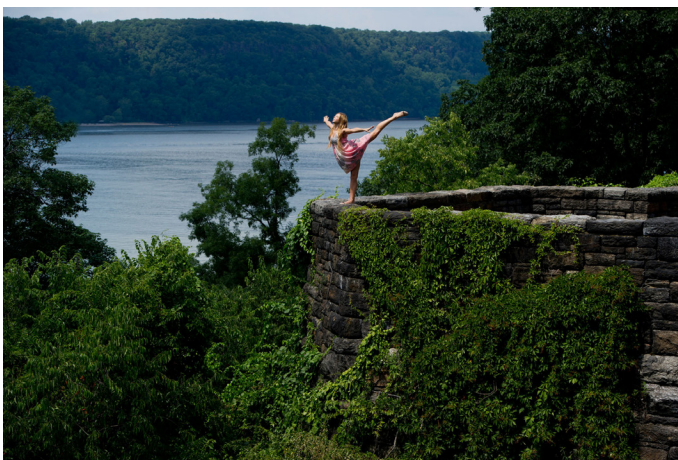
Introduction:

One way to tell a story is through the use of a **comic** or a **graphic novel**. In these formats, the story is broken down into multiple scenes and each scene is represented by a visual depiction, usually a drawing. It is up to the author/illustrator to decide how many individual scenes are included in the comic or graphic novel. Some have many small individual illustrations while others have a few larger, full-page illustrations. The formats of both a comic or graphic novel depend on the visuals to tell much of the plot, with assistance from text bubbles and small descriptions.

Visual stories warm up:

Artworks in different mediums construct narratives beyond what can merely be seen in the work. Flex your narrative-making muscles through observation of some different objects from the HRM's permanent collection. (See the following page.)

- What do you see in these artworks?
- What narrative can you construct about the figures or subject depicted without being given any context?
- What visual cues are you using to justify this narrative?
- What do you think the artist's purpose was in creating this scene / these scenes?



Images (clockwise from top left): Susan Hall (American, b. 1943). *Moving Home*, 1978. Acrylic on paper, mounted on canvas. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Schorr, 1983 (83.19.1). Art © Susan Hall/Licensed by VAGA at Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York, NY. Derrick Adams (American, b. 1970). *Orbiting Us #18*, 2018. Mixed media collage on paper. Museum Purchase, 2018 (2019.07). Ornamental Mirror Co., New York. *Day and Night*, 1871. Photogravure, mirror, ebonized wood. Gift of Jan and Warren Adelson, 2001 (2001.01.01, .02). Jordan Matter (American, b. 1966). *Vista*, 2011. Digital photograph on aluminum. Gift of the artist, 2016 (2016.06).

Activity brainstorm:

Compare the format of the hero's journey to your own life. Think about some challenges that you have overcome that have resulted in personal growth. These can be simple, such as acing a test in a difficult class, or more complicated and specific to your own experience. Most likely, you can think of multiple occasions when you overcame a challenge that resulted in personal growth. How did this challenge present itself to you? What emotions did you experience before, during, and after going through the event or challenge? How did you change as a result? Remember, change can be external or internal. Choose one personal event or challenge to highlight for this activity.

After plotting out the structure of your personal hero's journey, begin to think about how to visualize the story. What is the setting of your story? Does your tale take place in a real or fictional setting? What do your characters look like? If it is helpful, make a few sketches of your characters and the setting.

Procedure:

1. Plot out how many illustrations you are going to make to tell your story. You can do this by either drawing a box on your paper for each scene and including a small description, or by plotting each scene on a separate piece of paper.
2. Start to fill in your scenes. Think about the ways you want to depict the setting, your character(s), and the action that is occurring. How are you going to depict movement in the scene? How will you show sound? How will you differentiate between something a character is saying versus what they are thinking?
3. After you have filled in your scenes, make a title page. Secure all the pages together with a stapler, paperclip, or another method.
4. Since the hero's journey is cyclical, you can continue to add to your comic or graphic novel. Each new personal adventure, accomplishment, or challenge can be another section, chapter, or a sequel.

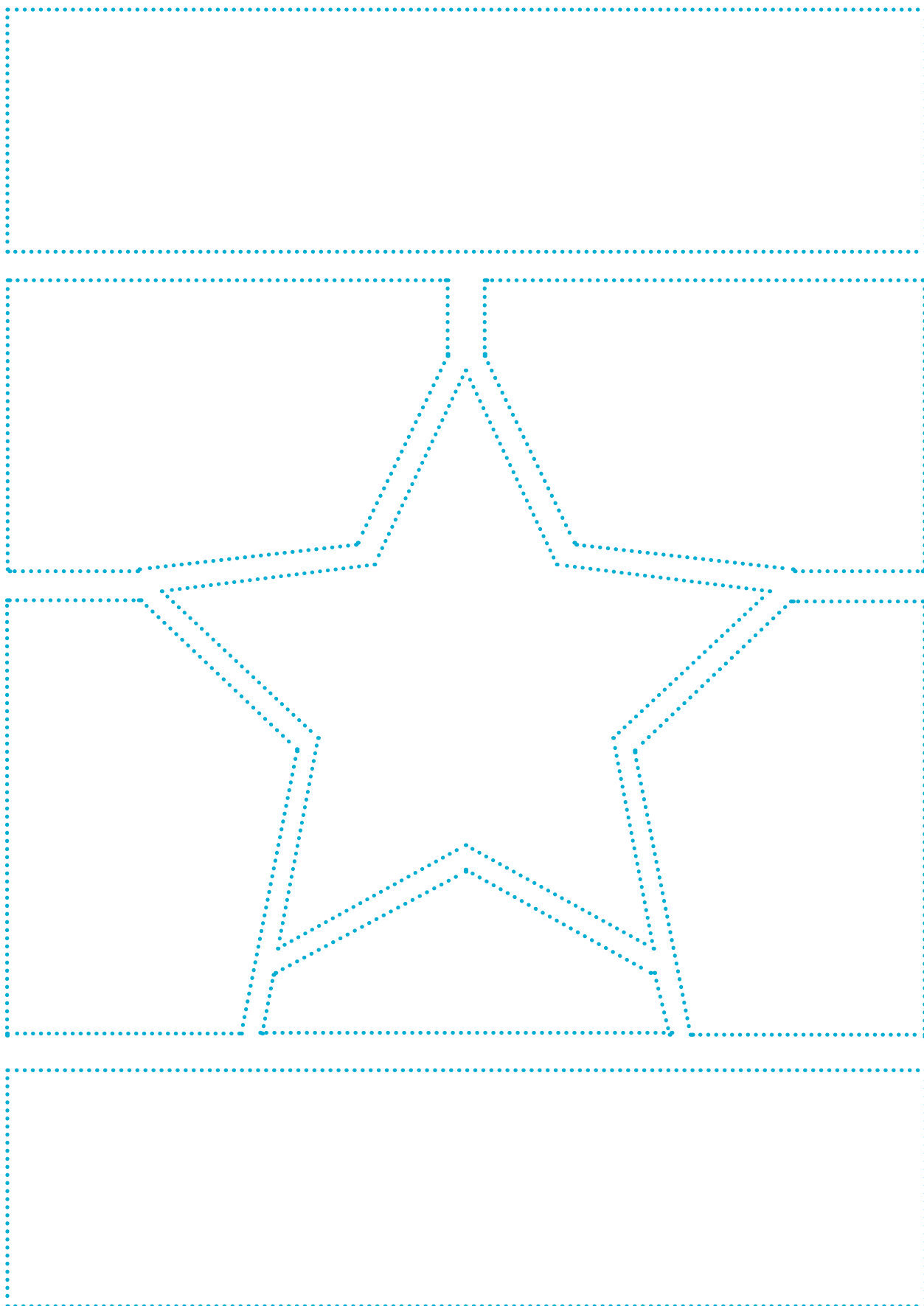
Share your work:

Take a photo of your picture and post it to Instagram using the hashtags #MuseumFromHome and #SkyLegends, and tag @HudsonRiverMuseum.

Graphic Novel Template 1

[illegible]

Graphic Novel Template 3





Part 4: Glossary & Further Resources

Ambiguity: The quality of being open to more than one interpretation; unclear.

Call to action: An invitation for the hero to take a desired action; in the hero's journey, the Call to Action moves the hero to begin their adventure.

Comic: A form of storytelling that heavily depends on illustrations to tell the plot; differing from a graphic novel, comics are released on a periodic basis, with each issue telling one part of a larger storyline.

Constellations: A group of stars that people have identified with an image, often representing a myth or legend. The root of the word comes from Latin, “con” meaning with, and “stella” meaning star, so a constellation is a picture made “with stars.”

Cyclical: Occuring in cycles; recurring.

Graphic novel: A full-length book where the story is told through a series of illustrations; differing from a comic, a graphic novel contains most of the plot in one or two books, instead of in a series of small magazines.

Hero/heroine: The main character in a story; the character that is at the center of the story and embarks on the adventure.

Hero's journey: A common template used for storytelling in which a hero goes on an adventure, overcomes a challenge, and comes back home transformed or changed; also called a monomyth.

Linear story structure: A story structure that has a clear beginning, middle, and end.

Monomyth: A common template used for storytelling in which a hero goes on an adventure, overcomes a challenge, and comes back home transformed or changed; also known as the hero's journey.

Moral: The principle of right or wrong behavior/actions; a person's standards of behavior.

Myth: A story that is handed down from earlier times that is often used to explain natural phenomena or a people's customs, history, or ideals. Myths typically have supernatural or imaginary elements and/or their characters have supernatural abilities.

Supernatural: Beyond the understanding or explanation of science or the laws of nature.

[Joseph Campbell Foundation](#)

[Brain Pickings: What Makes a Hero?](#)

[Gunn Center for the Study of Science Fiction: Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey](#)

Part 5: Standards

Common Core Learning Standards

English Language Arts

Reading Informational Text:

Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2-12.1

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2-12.10

Foundational Reading Skills:

Phonics and Word Recognition: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.2-12.3

Fluency: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.2-12.4

Writing:

Texts Types and Purposes: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2-12.1-2

Research to Build and Present Knowledge: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2-12.7-9

Speaking and Listening:

Comprehension and Collaboration: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2-12.1-3

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2-12.4-6

Language:

Conventions of Standard English: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.2-12.1-2

Knowledge of Language: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.2-12.3

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.2-12.4-6

Literacy in History and Social Studies

Reading:

Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-12.1-3

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-12.10

Writing:

Text Types and Purposes: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-12.1-3

Research to Build and Present Knowledge: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-12.7-9

Range of Writing: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-12.10

New York State Learning Standards

The Arts

Standard 1: Creating, Performing and Participating in the Arts

Standard 2: Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources

Standard 3: Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art

Standard 4: Understanding the Cultural Contributions of the Arts

English Language Arts

Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding

Standard 2: Language for Literary Response and Expression

Social Studies

Standard 1: History of the United States and New York

Standard 2: World History