

Choosing between red and green

[Literature](#), [Mythology](#)



Has the term 'hero' become too vague in modern times? Does its original meaning still stand today, the prestige of being labeled as heroic? According to common parlance, almost anyone is a hero in some way. Is "saying that everyone is special another way of saying that no-one is." It can be agreed upon that 'heroism' refers to sacrifice, selflessness, and courage, but to what extent does each attribute have to be shown to earn the legendary status of 'heroic'.

Classic hero stories such as Achilles and Gilgamesh, all have storylines that mirror that of Joseph Campbell's structure of 'The Hero's Journey.' They all feature some sort of person or character who has voluntarily put themselves in harm's way for the betterment of others. An accurate representation of the original meaning and attributes in which society regarded as heroic, is the first epic poem written, Beowulf.

Beowulf tells the story of a young Geatish warrior who comes to the aid of Hrothgar, the King of the Danes, whose kingdom is being terrorized by a monster named Grendel. Long story short, Beowulf mortally wounded Grendel, which granted him victory, in which he then had to face Grendel's mother who sought to avenge the son's death.

Beowulf then beheads Grendel's mother with an ancient sword, landed to him by Unferth, after almost dying himself. After ruling Geats for 50 years, he then ends up fighting a marauding dragon. Finding the dragon in its lair, Beowulf unsuspectingly kills the dragon, although receiving a mortal wound in the fight. He later dies, being buried back in his hometown, where he left

from. Beowulf uses his supernatural strength and bravery to defeat all three of his adversaries.

Whilst not matching the exact structure as Campbell's 'A Hero's Journey,' Beowulf features all the key stages. Campbell believed that every piece of hero-regarded fiction goes through 17 specific stages. These 17 stages can be further broken down into three distinct acts, departure, initiation, and the return. More simply, every film about a hero features a hero who sets out on a journey, faces a series of challenges, and then returns home after a triumphant victory.

In a more modern film, *The Matrix*, which is set in both 1999 and 2199 depending whose assumption of time is correct, we also see a very similar structure as to that of Beowulf, a mere 1200 years apart. *The Matrix*, is directed by the Wachowski Brothers, depicting a dystopian future in which all of humanity is trapped inside a simulated virtual reality called the Matrix. The Matrix was created by thought-capable machines, to control humans whilst using their bodies as an energy source. The main character, Thomas A Anderson is a man living two lives. By day, he is an average computer programmer, but by night, he is a computer hacker known as Neo.

Neo has always questioned his reality, but the truth is far beyond his imagination. Neo finds himself targeted by the police when he is contacted by Morpheus, a legendary computer hacker branded a terrorist by the government. Morpheus talks to Neo about the Matrix and the truth about the world he lives in and how he can save it. This is Neos "call to adventure."