

The hero's journey formula



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Hero's Journey is a formula theorised by Joseph Campbell appears in several stories throughout the history of films. The twelve steps within the Hero's Journey hasn't aged with time as it has continued to exist within genres of Hollywood films. The two movies whose concepts will be discussed are Star Trek (2009) directed J. J. Abrams and The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001) directed by Peter Jackson. These two movies follow the twelve concepts closely therefore making them perfect subjects to talk about.

Most films that follow the Hero's Journey contains the concept of ' The Ordinary World'. This is the first stage of the of the Hero's Journey and is where the hero usually lives. The Ordinary World reflects the environment, background, and ordinary life of the hero. Without this convention the audience would not be able to relate to the character and therefore struggle to understand the importance of the challenge that the Hero faces throughout the story.

In the Sci-fi Adventure film Star Trek our hero James T. Kirk lives a life of wasted potential in Iowa, consistently getting into trouble, shown through a scene at the beginning of the film. The scene shows the younger James who has stolen his step-father's antique car racing down an empty road with barren landscapes on either side. The scenery reflects his inner boredom, which is then interrupted by a police chase. From this scene we can already see the thrill and adventure seeking side of James who seems to be stuck in the dull environment of Iowa. All though this ' Ordinary World' is located in a time period 200 years from now the audience is able to understand James T. Kirk's wish to escape this barren lifestyle. Another scene from the Star Trek

movie that shows James's delinquent behaviour is in the bar near the beginning of the film. James introduces himself to a future companion Uhura before being interrupted by four Star Fleet officers who believe he is bothering her, trying to shrug them off James ends up getting into a fist fight with all four of them. Similarly, to the first scene the audience can see the the adrenaline fueled side of the main character. With this the audience can once again see the boredom with James's life as he seems to be a regular at the bar and drinks his wasting potential away. J. J. Abrams shows us this world to show us that James T. Kirk is tired of this ' Ordinary World' so we can tell that he is longing for adventure, in particular filling his father's shoes who was captain of the U. S. S Kelvin for 12 minutes and saved 800 lives.

Evidently, The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring directed by Peter Jackson also follows the Hero's Journey formula. At the beginning of the film we are introduced to Frodo Baggins, a hobbit who lives in Hobbiton, a peaceful and pleasant settlement located in the Shire. The audience is introduced to the ' Ordinary World' of Frodo to show how comfortable life is there and reinforce the idea of a warm, welcoming environment that doesn't wish to be disturbed. Both of Frodo's parents drowned in a boat accident when he was 12 and therefore he grew up with his uncle Bilbo Baggins whose history is abundant with adventure. Film techniques are extremely essential in order for the audience to recognize this cheerful environment. The first shot of the Shire we see is Frodo reading under a tree, other film techniques include the bright lighting as well as the sound where we hear birds chirping, these techniques make the audience recognize the peacefulness and harmony of this region. Generally, whilst following the

Hero's Journey formula there is some sort of stress involved in the main character's Ordinary World to further push them to begin their journey but in Frodo's case there seems to be none as he seems to be comfortable and happy with the life he lives. We aren't fully aware of Frodo's desires to leave but we can see he has a curiosity for the wider world as shown through the scene where he asks Gandalf, a wise wizard "What news of the outside world? Tell me everything". However, Frodo Baggin's burden lies with the ring his uncle found in the caves of the Misty Mountains which contains a very dangerous and powerful force.

Joseph Campbell's theory plays a huge part in this opening scene as we see the 'Ordinary World' through Frodo's eyes and we see how difficult it will be for him to leave when he crosses the threshold and agrees to take the ring to the Elvish city of Rivendell.

We can relate both films, Star Trek and Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring through several points which describe the Joseph Campbell's Ordinary World. Although the era of the films is completely different with one being set in the near future in 2233 and the other acting more as a myth from a mystical world thousands of years ago. First of all, James T. Kirk, our hero in Star Trek has had a parent die through the death of his father George Kirk. Similarly, in The Lord of the Rings both of Frodo's parents died due to a boating accident. Also, we see in both films that both our heroes are comfortable with the world they live in. Of course both characters have different reasons why with James enjoying the routine of an intelligent young adult whilst being drunk, minor repeat offender and Frodo cherishing the peacefulness and harmony of his Shire.

Another key convention from Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey which appears in Star Trek and The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring is 'Crossing the Threshold'. This is where the hero commits to leaving the Ordinary World and entering a new region or condition with different rules that they must oblige to. This convention tests the hero as they are leaving behind their Ordinary World which which in Star Trek and The Lord of the Rings is the main characters' homes. Without this convention, the audience cannot understand that the hero is leaving the comfortable surroundings and entering an unfamiliar environment.

In Star Trek, this convention stands out. Not only is James T. Kirk leaving his Ordinary World in Iowa and cross the threshold by joining Starfleet. First of all, we see several different shots of him riding his motor bike across the barren Iowa landscape before a huge Starfleet station appears in the background of these shots. Not only does this show audience the transition of what James is comfortable around to something that he is unfamiliar shown by the low angle close up shot on his face showing the expression of awe as he admires the sheer size of the Starfleet station. We still see him wear his black leather jacket and jeans, an appearance for trouble makers, a trait which continues exists throughout the film with his cheekiness. This tells the audience he is not giving up Iowa lightly for the opportunity to join Starfleet because if he had he would have most likely already been wearing a Starfleet uniform. Another crucial moment which shows his uneasiness at Crossing the Threshold is when he boards the pod and bangs his head on a low clearance bar giving him pain. This moment clearly shows his unfamiliarity with this new journey he had just agreed to partake on and

clearly shows the audience he is already uncomfortable with this new surrounding. This change further impacts the rest of the film as it is the beginning of the adventure he undergoes. Without this convention the audience would not be able to understand the change that further develops our hero James T. Kirk to become a reasonably responsible captain from a farm boy drunkard growing up in Iowa.

Evidently, In The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring this convention stands out as well as it shows the beginning of the adventure that Frodo and his companions undertake. At first Frodo and Gandalf discover the danger and darkness of the ring the Bilbo Baggins found long ago in a Misty Mountain cave. They both agree that it must be taken to Bree, a rather large settlement located between the outskirts of the Shire and the Elvish capital, Rivendell. Samwise Gamgee, a close friend of Frodo overhears Gandalf's and Frodo's discussion about the evil powers of the ring and as soon as he blows his cover he is reluctantly forced into coming with Frodo. Crossing the Threshold at first doesn't seem to affect Frodo but more Sam as they walk through the peaceful landscape of the Shire where he stops all of a sudden in a wheat field and says ' This is it, if I take one more step... It'll be the farthest away from home I've ever been'. For Sam this is a very important scene as it indicates the change that he undertakes leaving his peaceful and happy Ordinary World that he instantly cherishes at the particular moment. Frodo on the other hand, growing up listening to Bilbo's stories about adventure is completely comfortable with this transition from leaving the Shire. Peter Jackson shows the audience this key scene as it allows them to relate to the discomfort of Sam as most of the audience have

been in similar circumstances and have to leave their comfort zone behind them. This trick instantly draws the audience to furthermore like the sweet and happy hobbits who play throughout the Lord of the Rings trilogy.