

# Main heroes in ancient egypt



## **A Hero's Paths**

While all heroes may be unique, many follow a structured path which can be identified and even predicted. A hero is not just a person who is given great power or influence, they only truly become a hero when they choose not to abuse the power that has been given to them. In Joseph Campbell's excerpt targeting college students, "The Self As Hero", Campbell claims that all heroes follow a specific format with only a few possible variations along the way. The three heroes will be examining in this are Eragon, from the book Eragon by Christopher Paolini, Achilles, From The Adventures of Odysseus and The Tales of Troy by Padriac Colum, and Osiris from The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt by Richard Wilkerson. Throughout this paper I will examine the act of the hero leaving home, their call to adventure, the crossing of the threshold, the hero's magical aid, the fulfillment of their quest, and their choice over their return.

The first step in a hero's journey is their choice to leave home. As Campbell said in his excerpt "The first stage is leaving where you are, whatever the environment. You may leave because of the environment is repressive and you are consciously uneasy and eager to leave" (113). This is saying one of the many ways to leave where they are is because the hero feels uncomfortable where they are and believes that they may be safer or happier somewhere else. While this is often true, there is another type of leaving home, In some cases it is not a literal meaning of leaving home and it can be something that happens that changes your life. In the Story of Eragon, by Christopher Paolini, Eragon is a simple villager, however when he goes into the forest to hunt for deer, however while out there "an explosion

shattered the night. [...] A wisp of smoke curled in the air, carrying a burnt smell. In the center of the blast radius lay a polished blue stone. [...] he decided with a shrug, tucking the stone into his pack" (10). While Eragon did not know this at the time, he would later find out that the stone was really the egg of a dragon and by taking it home he had left his old home and started a new journey. While this does follow the basic outline of Campbell's leaving home, it does not quite fit with it in the most literal sense of the idea.

The next step in a hero's journey is the call to adventure. This call can be a large variety of different things depending on the context of the story, as Campbell said " a call to advenrure [can be] an alluring temptation [...] In european myths this call is frequently represented by some animal" (113). The call to adventure can really be anything that tempts or causes the character to leave their comfortable life and go along with the journey that lies ahead of them. In the story of Achilles he is sent away to hide in the company of King Lycomedes' daughters due to the fact that King Agamemnon wanted him to fight among his warriors. The call however is truly heeded when Odysseus came to search for Achilles and looked among the daughters "[Odysseus] returned as a peddler carrying in his pack such things as maidens admire [...] The mirrors and veils and ornaments were taken up and examined eagerly. But one of the company took up the gleaming sword and looked at it with flashing eyes. Odysseus knew that this was Achilles, King Peleus' son" (Colum 60). This fits into the category of something luring the hero to leave because after he is found Odysseus gives Achilles the summons to come fight with Agamemnon's men and Achilles is

more than happy to comply. This is a very typical call to adventure because you see the hero being drawn away by the glory of battle.

Crossing the threshold is typically one of the most dramatic changes in the progress of a story. It is where something happens in the hero's life that typically makes it very difficult or even impossible to go back to their own life until they have completed their journey, or even in some cases forever.

Campbell's ideal of what the crossing should look like is "the individual is invoked to engage in a dangerous adventure. It's always a dangerous adventure because you're moving out of the familiar sphere of your community. In myths, this is represented as moving out of the known sphere altogether into the great beyond" (115). This may be a very specific example, but it does a good job explaining the basic idea of the threshold.

However there can be other methods of crossing it such as in the Egyptian story of Osiris, "the core myths were preserved by the Greek writer Plutarch [...] where essentially it is claimed that [Osiris] once ruled Egypt as a king until he was murdered and cruelly dismembered and scattered by his jealous brother Seth" (Wilkinson 119). While there are similarities between this threshold and the normal ideals of one, there are also major differences. The biggest difference is that Osiris does not make the choice to cross the threshold in this story, his brother by murdering him effectively pushes him across the threshold and into the next stage of his journey. The murder clearly signals the end of his life while also signaling the end of his reign as king a position he may never return to.

The Hero is never able to overcome all their future challenges on their own, and it is because of this that they must always have a helper who provides

you with some sort of magical aid in their journey. Campbell, however has a very narrow view of what role the helper should play in the story “[the helper] may be some little wood sprite or a wise man or fairy godmother or animal that comes to you as a companion or as an advisor [...] You are given little tokens that will protect you, images to meditate on [...] that will guide you and keep you on the path” (116).

While this may be true for many stories, it is not true for all. In Osiris’ story the helper plays a much larger role than Campbell ever mentions. After Osiris is dismembered, and his body scattered by Seth “ [d]ue to the loyalty and dedication of his wife Isis and with the help of their sister Nephthys, Osiris was found and revived and became the god of the netherworld” (Wilkerson 119). While Osiris may be the hero in his story, before he is resurrected he plays no role in accomplishing anything. In this case Isis and Nephthys are much more than just helpers. They become the heroes until a time when Osiris can come back and complete his journey. This shows a situation where instead of the helper giving the hero a token or something similar to guide them on their path the helper takes a direct role in progressing the story along.

The fulfillment of a hero’s quest may have many parts leading up to it, but there is always one specific act that sets in motion the rest of the story. After this point there is nothing else the hero can do in regards to this goal they had the whole time. “ In any case, once the treasure has been grabbed there is no reconciliation with the powers of the underworld [...] there is a violent reaction of the whole unconscious system against the act, and the hero must escape” (Campbell 118). In the Achilles’ Journey his fulfillment comes when

he kills Hector “ As Hector [attacked,] Achilles drove at his neck with his spear and struck him and Hector fell in the dust. Then Achilles stripped from him the armor that Patroklos had worn. The other captains of the Greeks came up and looked at Hector where he lay and all marveled at his size and strength and goodliness. And Achilles dragged the body at his chariot and drove away towards the ships” (Colum 106). The slaying of Hector is Achilles’ fulfillment of his quest, however the only thing he must escape from in this story is himself. Achilles will never be a true hero until he learns to win his battles while maintaining respect for his enemies. By dragging Hector’s body behind his chariot, rather than allowing him a proper burial he is showing that he does not know how to win with dignity. This shows a deviation from Campbell’s path that a hero takes because after his fulfillment there is nothing more he has to worry about. He must only learn how to behave himself in the face of victory.

The last stage in a hero’s journey is their return, or in some cases the refusal to return. “ There comes the crossing of the line again, what I call the return across the threshold. The line through which you passed when you went into the abyss is the line through which you pass when you leave the powers behind” (Campbell 119). According to Campbell the only two paths that can be taken from here are either to return back to your old life and become a part of the regular world again, or to be forever changed by the experience and not be able to return for lack of fitting in. However in the story of Eragon something drastically different happens, after Eragon defeats his enemy a mysterious voice begins to speak to him, “ He recoiled at the touch of another consciousness—one so vast and powerful it was like a mountain

looming over him. This was who was blocking the pain, he realized. [...] he dared ask, Who . . . who are you?

One who would help. With a flicker of an unspoken thought, the Shade's influence was brushed aside like an unwanted cobweb. [...] I can do no more than shield your sanity from the pain.

Again: Who are you to do this? There was a low rumble. I am Osthato Chetowä, the Mourning Sage. And Togira Ikonoka, the Cripple Who Is Whole. Come to me, Eragon, for I have answers to all you ask. You will not be safe until you find me" (Paolini 363). In this case Eragon chooses not to return, however it is not because he can't fit in to his old home, in fact it is because a greater journey is still ahead of him and he is now heeding its call. This is a path which Campbell does not even consider after the fulfillment of a hero's journey.

Campbell makes many knowledgeable and true statements about many paths that hero's can take throughout their journey's in "The Self as Hero". However his paths that he lays out are incomplete and miss many different story arcs that a hero can take as alternatives to what Campbell claims. While Campbell is still a very knowledgeable source for the journeys that a hero might undertake, a reader should not think that they are the only possibilities that a story can follow. Every author can add their own twist to each stage of the quest which could confuse you if you