

GRADE 8 STAGE 4



TEACHING  
UNIT

# The Hero's Journey

An integrated language, literacy & literature student workbook for exploring the hero's journey in narrative & nonfiction texts

shelley mcnamara



# QWILLER TEACHING UNIT: THE HERO'S JOURNEY

(NSW English 7–10 Syllabus  
for the Australian curriculum)

Grade 7/18

Stage 4

SHELLEY MCNAMARA



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## Unit Overview

<b>Unit title:</b>	<b>The Hero's Journey</b>	<b>Stage/Year:</b>	Stage 4, Year 7/8
<b>Duration:</b>	10 weeks (6 parts)	<b>Assessment:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summary of a hero's journey narrative, a hero's journey storyboard + review</li> </ul>
<b>Targeted content groups/ Textual concepts:</b>	<p><b>Understanding and responding to texts A</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Representation</b> – Examining how heroes and heroines are portrayed across different cultures and narratives.</li> <li><b>Code and convention</b> – Analysing structural and stylistic techniques used in hero's journey narratives.</li> <li><b>Connotation, imagery and symbol</b> – Identifying recurring motifs, symbols, and their significance in hero stories.</li> <li><b>Point of view</b> – Exploring how perspective influences the hero's journey and audience perception.</li> <li><b>Characterisation</b> – Studying how heroes/heroines develop through their journeys.</li> <li><b>Narrative</b> – Understanding how the hero's journey structure shapes storytelling.</li> </ul> <p><b>Understanding and responding to texts B</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Theme</b> – Investigating themes such as transformation, sacrifice, and resilience in hero narratives.</li> <li><b>Perspective and context</b> – Considering how cultural and historical contexts shape hero representations.</li> <li><b>Style</b> – Analysing the unique styles of different composers in constructing hero narratives.</li> </ul> <p><b>Understanding and responding to texts C</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Genre</b> – Examining how the hero's journey functions within fantasy, science fiction, mythology, and other genres.</li> </ul>	<b>Meeting the text requirements:</b>	<p>As the focus of learning in each Stage, students are required to engage meaningfully with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>extended prose</li> <li>film</li> </ul> <p>Across each stage, the selection of texts must give students experiences of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a range of fiction and non-fiction texts that are widely regarded as quality literature</li> <li>a range of texts by Australian authors</li> <li>a range of cultural, social and gender perspectives, including from popular and youth cultures.</li> </ul>

## Unit Overview

<p><b>Sentence-level grammar and punctuation:</b></p>	<p><b>Punctuation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How punctuation impacts tone, pacing, and emotional effect in narratives</li> <li>• Dashes, quotation marks, ellipses, and question marks</li> </ul> <p><b>Grammar</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct &amp; indirect speech rules</li> <li>• Descriptive language (adjectives and adverbs)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Word-level language:</b></p>	<p><b>Vocabulary</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• key vocabulary related to the hero's journey, including archetypes, motifs, values, beliefs, and cultural stories</li> </ul> <p><b>Spelling</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spelling rules, including:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* ie/ei rule (believe, receive).</li> <li>* Dropping the final -e when adding -ing (create – creating)</li> <li>* Doubling the last letter before adding a suffix (grin – grinned)</li> <li>* Changing y to i before -es (enemy – enemies)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Outcomes:</b></p>	<p><b>NSW English Syllabus: Stage 4</b></p> <p><b>Understanding and responding to texts A</b>  <b>EN4-URA-01</b> analyses how meaning is created through the use of and response to language forms, features and structures</p> <p><b>Understanding and responding to texts B</b>  <b>EN4-URB-01</b> examines and explains how texts represent ideas, experiences and values</p> <p><b>Expressing ideas and composing texts A</b>  <b>EN4-ECA-01</b> creates personal, creative and critical texts for a range of audiences by using linguistic and stylistic conventions of language to express ideas</p> <p><b>Expressing ideas and composing texts B</b>  <b>EN4-ECB-01</b> uses processes of planning, monitoring, revising and reflecting to support and develop composition of texts</p>	<p><b>Learning across the curriculum areas:</b></p> <p><b>Essential learning goals/intentions:</b></p>	<p><b>General capabilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical &amp; creative thinking</li> <li>• Literacy</li> </ul> <p><b>Other learning across the curriculum areas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difference &amp; diversity</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an understanding of Joseph Campbell's 'The Hero's Journey' and Maureen Murdock's 'the heroine's journey' and their significance in storytelling.</li> <li>• Analyse how composers use narrative techniques to shape hero stories across different cultural and historical contexts.</li> <li>• Apply knowledge of the hero's journey to create and critique hero narratives in literature, film, and original compositions.</li> </ul>

## Unit Overview

### Unit rationale:

This unit provides students with an opportunity to explore how composers use various devices to tell a story through the lens of Joseph Campbell's 'The Hero's Journey' and Maureen Murdock's 'The Heroine's Journey'. By engaging with a diverse range of texts—including literature, film, mythology, and real-life hero narratives—students will develop an understanding of how these structures shape storytelling and reflect cultural values.

Students will analyse the mythology of stories and evaluate the representation of hero and heroine figures across fiction and non-fiction texts. They will explore how traditional and modern narratives challenge or reinforce societal perceptions of heroism. Through this, they will critically assess the role of gender, identity, and purpose in shaping heroic figures.

The unit includes generic lessons on the hero's journey, allowing students to study the structure within a novel, short story, or film of their choice. By examining their selected text, students will compare the structural elements of different hero's journey narratives, develop character voice through stylistic analysis, and examine how themes such as sacrifice, transformation, and resilience contribute to compelling storytelling.

Additionally, students will engage in creative and analytical tasks that foster deeper comprehension and practical application. To demonstrate their understanding, students will create a storyboard depicting a scene from a film—either an original composition or an adaptation of an existing scene—that illustrates the arc of the hero's or heroine's journey. This hands-on activity will allow students to apply their knowledge of narrative devices, visual storytelling, and thematic development while refining their creative expression and analytical thinking skills.

By the end of the unit, students will have gained a nuanced appreciation of the hero's journey as a universal storytelling framework and its relevance to contemporary narratives and real-world contexts.

Outcome & content	Teaching & learning sequence
<b>Part 1: Developing engagement - What is a hero/heroine?</b>	
<p><b>Reading, viewing and listening for meaning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and understand that relevant prior knowledge and personal experience enables and enhances understanding when reading, viewing or listening to texts</li> </ul> <p><b>Representation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore how language and text are acts of representation that range from objective to subjective and may offer layers of literal or implied meanings, and apply this understanding in own texts</li> </ul>	<b>Lesson 1.1: What is a hero/heroine?</b>
	<b>Learning intentions:</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the key characteristics of heroes and heroines in narratives.</li> <li>Compare and contrast traditional and modern representations of heroism.</li> <li>Explore how cultural contexts shape heroic identities.</li> <li>Understand and critique how heroes and heroines are represented in literature and film.</li> </ol>
	<b>Evidence of learning:</b>
	<p><b>Achievement criteria</b></p> <p>To demonstrate their learning, student will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and describe common traits of heroes in literature and film.</li> <li>Compare the characteristics of male and female heroes.</li> <li>Analyse how societal expectations influence the portrayal of heroes.</li> <li>Write an internal monologue from the perspective of hero or heroine.</li> </ol>
<b>Teaching guidance:</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce the lesson concept.</li> <li>Explore Dig Deep activity with the class.</li> <li>Students complete the activity, completing as many levels as they can.</li> <li>See 'Hungry for more' independent learning tasks to extend students.</li> </ol>	

# 1.1: What is a hero/heroine?

## HEROES AND HEROINES IN LITERATURE AND FILM

### Dig deep

#### Think, pair, share

1. Look at the image on the left depicting a hero and heroine that you might find in literature. Discuss the following questions with a partner.
- e. How does this image reflect texts you would associate with the hero or heroine?
- f. Does this image represent your understanding of heroes and heroines? In what ways does it represent your understanding of heroes/heroines? In what ways does it NOT represent your understanding of heroes/heroines?
- g. Does this image represent the cultural diversity of our society? In what ways does it represent the cultural diversity of our society? In what ways does it NOT represent the cultural diversity of our society?
- h. What would you change about this image to make it more culturally diverse and realistic?
2. Create a visual representation of a more culturally diverse hero and heroine in literature. As an alternative, create a simple sketch and label with features of your hero and heroine that reflect cultural diversity.

## HEROES IN *THE WIZARD OF OZ*



As you read these quotes from *The Wizard of Oz*, jot down ideas about the heroic qualities of the various characters.

## The Wizard of Oz quotes

### Quote 1: Chapter 1, cyclone quote

'It was Toto that made Dorothy laugh, and saved her from growing as grey as her other surroundings. Toto was not grey; he was a little black dog, with long silky hair and small black eyes that twinkled merrily on either side of his funny, wee nose. Toto played all day long, and Dorothy played with him, and loved him dearly.'

### Quote 2: Chapter 6, Cowardly Lion quote

'Once, indeed, the Tin Woodman stepped upon a beetle that was crawling along the road, and killed the poor little thing. This made the Tin Woodman very unhappy, for he was always careful not to hurt any living creature; and as he walked along he wept several tears of sorrow and regret.'

### Quote 3: Chapter 7, the journey to the Great Oz quote

'We are lost, for they will surely tear us to pieces with their sharp claws. But stand close behind me, and I will fight them as long as I am alive.'

### Quote 4: Chapter 12, The Search for the Wicked Witch Quotes

'We dare not harm this little girl,' he said to them, 'for she is protected by the Power of Good, and that is greater than the Power of Evil. All we can do is to carry her to the castle of the Wicked Witch and leave her there.'

### Quote 5: Chapter 13, The Rescue Quotes

'When, at last, he walked into Dorothy's room and thanked her for rescuing him, he was so pleased that he wept tears of joy, and Dorothy had to wipe every tear carefully from his face with her apron, so his joints would not be rusted. At the same time her own tears fell thick and fast at the joy of meeting her old friend again, and these tears did not need to be wiped away.'

### Quote 6: Oz's advice

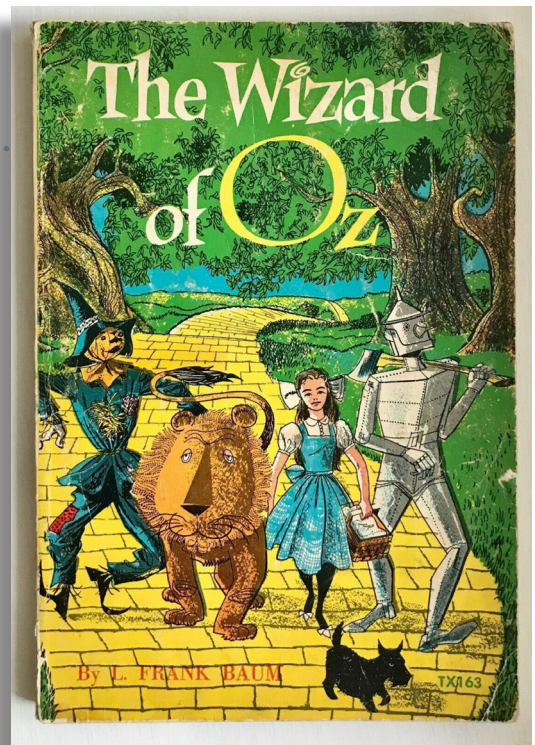
'You have plenty of courage, I am sure,' answered Oz. 'All you need is confidence in yourself. There is no living thing that is not afraid when it faces danger. True courage is in facing danger when you are afraid, and that kind of courage you have in plenty.'

### Quote 7: Glinda grants Dorothy's wish quotes

'She threw her arms around the Lion's neck and kissed him, patting his big head tenderly. Then she kissed the Tin Woodman, who was weeping in a way most dangerous to his joints. But she hugged the soft, stuffed body of the Scarecrow instead of kissing his painted face, and found she was crying herself at this sorrowful parting from her loving comrades.'

Source: An original novel cover

[https://i.etsystatic.com/13525222/r/il/e5b0d8/3161504629/il\\_1588xN.3161504629\\_f769.jpg](https://i.etsystatic.com/13525222/r/il/e5b0d8/3161504629/il_1588xN.3161504629_f769.jpg)



## Dig deep

### Think, pair, share

1. Look at the cover of the original novel, *The Wizard of Oz* (above). How does this cover convey heroic qualities? Is there anything about this covers that does not convey heroic qualities? What are they? Explain why you think this.
2. For each quote, write down the heroic qualities depicted.
3. What makes these qualities heroic to you? Explain your ideas.
4. Which qualities of a hero do you most relate to. Explain why you think this.

## HEROES IN FILM

## Dig deep

### Think, pair, share

1. Choose a film that includes a hero and/or heroine that appeals to you. Watch the trailer for this film. See the examples above to get you started. Discuss the following questions:
  - a. How are heroism and courage depicted in the trailer, and do these portrayals differ between male and female characters?
  - b. In what ways does the trailer address the abilities of its heroes and heroines, particularly in terms of physical, mental, or supernatural powers?
  - c. How does the trailer reflect cultural diversity through its characters, settings, or themes?
  - d. What impact might the portrayal of heroes and heroines in the trailer have on audiences' perceptions of gender roles, ability, and cultural diversity?

## Activity 1.1: Exploring heroes and heroines

### Level 1

1. In pairs, think about heroes and heroines in literature and film, both past and present. Write a list.
2. Choose one hero or heroine you are familiar with.
3. Write down your ideas for the following:
  - a. What heroic deeds does your hero/heroine perform?
  - b. Describe your hero's characteristics:
    - physical characteristics
    - personality
    - typical behaviour
    - achievements.

### Level 2

4. Creative writing activity: Think about your literary hero or heroine. Write an internal monologue from the perspective of this character where they demonstrate their perspective on themselves as a hero/heroine. What do they think about being a hero/heroine? Is it justified? Why/why not? How does this literary character see themselves? See the notes below on how to write an internal monologue.

#### How to write an internal monologue for a character

- **Understand the character:** Know their personality, motivations, and emotional state.
- **Set the context:** Establish the situation or trigger for the internal monologue (e.g., a conflict or decision).
- **Use first-person perspective:** Write in the character's voice using 'I' to reflect their thoughts and emotions.
- **Show, don't tell:** Include sensory details, emotions, and imagery to make their inner world vivid.
- **Keep it authentic:** Use language and tone that match the character's personality and background.
- **Reveal conflict:** Highlight internal struggles, fears, or desires to add depth.
- **Include stream of consciousness:** Use fragmented thoughts or questions to reflect real thinking patterns.
- **Maintain flow:** Ensure thoughts connect logically or emotionally, even if they're disjointed.
- **End with purpose:** Conclude the monologue with a decision, realisation, or unresolved tension to drive the story forward.

## Activity 1.1: Exploring heroes and heroines

5. Share your monologue with a partner. What is similar/different about the internal thoughts of the heroic character? Why do you think this is the case?

### Level 3

6. Write a critique of a film trailer or blurb on a novel/short story about heroes and/or heroines.
7. Include your perception on the following:
  - traditional and emerging representations of gender in heroic roles
  - the representation of diverse abilities and whether it perpetuates stereotypes or showcases characters overcoming adversity in a manner that is inclusive and empowering
  - the authentic representation of the cultural backgrounds of the heroes and heroines and how these backgrounds inform their identities and motivations
  - a consideration of how these portrayals might influence individuals' understanding of what it means to be a hero or heroine
  - how these narratives contribute to shaping societal norms and expectations around gender, ability, and cultural identity.

### How to write a critique

- Writing a critique involves a structured approach to analysing and evaluating a work, such as an article, book, film, or painting, focusing on its strengths and weaknesses.

#### Structuring a critique

- **Introduction:** briefly introduce the work, including its title, author/creator, and your thesis statement.
- **Body paragraphs:** discuss various elements of the work (such as its structure, themes, execution, and impact) and support your evaluations with evidence. Contrast your observations with your research findings.
- **Conclusion:** summarise your main points and reiterate your thesis, highlighting the significance of your analysis.

#### Some pointers

- **Use evidence:** support your analysis: Provide specific examples from the work to back up your evaluations, whether praising or critiquing aspects of it.
- **Edit and revise:** review your work: Check for clarity, coherence, and conciseness in your arguments. Ensure that your critique is well-organised and your evidence clearly supports your thesis.
- **Proofread:** look for grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors.
- **Cite your sources:** make sure to properly cite any quotations, summaries, or ideas that are not your own, following the appropriate academic style guide.