

Using Mythic Structure of Campbell's Monomyth to Analyze *Spirited Away*: A Heroine's Journey

Meng-Hsuan Wu¹, Ya-huei Wang*²

¹Department of Applied Foreign Languages,
Chung Shan Medical University

²Department of Medical Education,
Chung Shan Medical University Hospital
No. 110, Sec. 1, Jian-Koa N. Rd, Taichung, Taiwan

E-mail: yhuei@csmu.edu.tw

*corresponding author

Received:
24 September 2021

Revised:
20 January 2022

Accepted:
3 February 2022

Published:
30 April 2022

Abstract

This study intends to examine the stages of the hero's journey based on the mythic structure of Campbell's monomyth and use the monomyth to analyze how a ten-year-old girl, Chihiro, embarks on a journey to the supernatural world in *Spirited Away*. The study uses content analysis, a descriptive qualitative method, to analyze the monomyth: a departure–initiation–return journey covering seventeen stages. The monomyth involves metamorphoses and challenges that the heroine Chihiro encounters and explores her evolution during her transition to full autonomy in order to reach transformation and self-individuation. Chihiro, in order to rescue her parents, is destined to take the journey: to sink into darkness, the unconscious, and encounter her natural and primitive essence. By fighting against conflict or opposition, Chihiro, as a mythical heroine, completes her monomyth cycle and attains transformation and regeneration.

Keywords: monomyth, the hero's journey, self-individuation, initiation, transformation, regeneration

Introduction

The term “myth” refers to something unreal, yet commonly believed by human beings. According to sacred narratives, myths explain how the world and human beings came into existence (Alan, 1984; Leeming, 2011). Myths pertain to the beginning of the earth, the nature of gods, the creation of human beings, and even the virgin birth in different regions, ritual ceremonies, and religious representations regarding births, marriages, burials, and so forth (Spence, 2004; Campbell, 1949, 2008, & 2014), and are rife with metaphors and symbolism. Though there is no definite interpretation of myths, they have been regarded as primitive allegories to explain the world of nature, using symbols, images, and archetypes to give meaning to life or human existence. However, in modern society, which focuses on science



and technology, people are resistant to myths or mythology, eschewing the notion that not only science but also mythology can extend the vision of human experience. Without the assistance of mythology to provide an outlet for repressed feelings, people may lose meaning and direction in their life (Levi-Strauss, 1955).

Indeed, the development of science and technology has hindered people's recognition of mythology (Robert, 1987) and strengthened their denial that myths somehow serve as a unique instrument helping human beings to mediate and identify meaning in the process of reality development (Blocian, 2015). Campbell (1949, 2008, & 2014) has declared that mythology, a collection of myths connected to psychology, has been misread as biography, history, or cosmology, leading people to overlook mythology's profound depth (Campbell, 1949, 2008, & 2014).

Campbell (1949, 2008, & 2014) has further argued that mythology enriches the human spirit through symbols, images, and themes. In addition to the involvement of the human spirit and mind, myths involve a dynamic interaction between the unconscious and the conscious. Hence, through the acquisition of mythology, human beings can mediate their personal experiences and achieve reality development (Blocian, 2015).

The term "monomyth," the hero's journey, was coined by Campbell (1949, 2008, & 2014); it indicates heroic narratives in which a heroic protagonist sets out on a journey and, after transformative adventures, returns home with rewards. Myths are the language of the unconscious, with archetypal meanings hidden inside (Jung, 1990). For instance, the monomyth, through different forms, shares the assumptions that an archetypal hero (Campbell, 2002; Guerin, 1979; Jung, 1990), a prototype of human figures, sinks into darkness, the unconscious, to encounter the natural and primitive instinct sphere, and by fighting against sociocultural values, this mythic hero can successfully transgress his instinctive chaotic drives and transform himself into a man with autonomy, building upon his human ego from the unconscious, and finally returning to his ordinary world in triumph. Hence, the monomyth can be considered a representation of the hero's individuation process—a journey to reach self-realization (Beggan, 2016; Blocian, 2015), which involves metamorphoses and challenges that the hero encounters, and a negotiation during the transition to full autonomy in order to reach transformation and renewal. In essence, the monomyth involves human beings' inevitable and recurring transformations, as well as rebirth and regeneration (Palumbo, 2014). Therefore, it can be a crucial mechanism for a person's self-development, self-identification, and self-realization.

There are astonishing similarities between the monomyth's archetypal patterns between different civilizations and cultures from the past to the present, always in the pattern of departure → initiation → return. Those embarking on an adventure face various challenges and conflicts, conquer their difficulties, and ultimately attain a decisive victory and return triumphantly to the ordinary world. In order to further realize monomythic archetypes and patterns, as well as their hidden significance and implication, this study intends to use the film *Spirited Away* to demonstrate and analyze the mythic structure of Campbell's (1949, 2008, & 2014) monomyth.

Method



This study uses content analysis, a descriptive qualitative method, to analyze the film *Spirited Away*, based on Campbell's theory (1949, 1993, 2008, & 2014) about monomyth explored in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. As Creswell (2013) suggests that qualitative research is a process of inquiry into natural or social settings via qualitative methods to illustrate social or human problems. Hence, in the qualitative content analysis of the study, while analyzing the data, the researchers were not in the position to manipulate the data but examined the data in cinema and script to interpret the phenomenon as it was. As Neuman indicates (2007), qualitative data are in the forms of written words, sentences, photographs, or symbols used to illustrate or analyze people, actions, events or phenomena in social life (Neuman, 2007). The data collected in the study included the written words, schemes, dialogues, pictures, images, gestures, symbols, archetypes, etc. in the cinema and script of *Spirited Away* (Miyazaki, 2001). After an extensive literature study on the theory of monomyth (Campbell, 1949, 2008, & 2014) and a thorough study of the cinema and the film script of *Spirited Away*, to further analyze the data collected, the researchers used the monomyth as a tool to examine the stages of the heroine Chihiro Ogino, who went on an adventure, conquered difficulties in a series of decisive crises, and finally came home with victories.

Based on Campbell's (1949, 2008, & 2014) monomyth, for personal development, a hero will journey into the world of the unknown, not knowing where to go or what to do, though with some ambiguous cues. Hence, the hero must find his own way and know what he wants. To achieve the goal, the hero strives to persevere; in the process, he will realize his own potential and become much stronger, physically and spiritually. After conquering all of the challenges and difficulties, the hero will return to his ordinary world, having transformed from an innocent child to an adult. The following are the three monomythic phases and seventeen steps in terms of Campbell's mythic structure of monomyth:

- Phase 1: Departure (5 stages):
The call to adventure; refusal of the call; supernatural aid; the crossing of the first threshold; the belly of the whale
- Phase 2: Initiation (6 stages):
The road of trials; the meeting with the goddess; woman as the temptress; atonement with the Father; apotheosis; the ultimate boon
- Phase 3: Return (6 stages):
Refusal of the return; the magic flight; rescue from without; the crossing of the return threshold; master of the two worlds; freedom to live

This study adopted Campbell's theory of monomyth to analyze the process that the ten-year-old heroine, Chihiro, goes through in *Spirited Away*, specifically, the seventeen interconnected stages of a hero's departure–initiation–return journey, through which Chihiro realizes her potential and transforms from an innocent child to an adult with self-determination.

Findings and Discussion

Spirited Away as a monomyth



The Japanese film *Spirited Away* (2001), directed by Hayao Miyazaki and animated by Studio Ghibli, is full of monomythic archetypes and patterns. It is a self-individuation story of a ten-year-old girl, Chihiro Ogino. After moving to a new town with her parents, Chihiro accidentally enters a place that she has never been to, a world full of deities and phantoms. Upon entering the place, she encounters many difficulties and becomes stuck in that supernatural world. In addition, her parents, who had also entered the mystery world, became victims of a spell and were turned into pigs after devouring food without permission at a restaurant. In order to save her parents, Chihiro needs to break the spell in the supernatural world; then, her parents will return to being human beings, and Chihiro will be able to return to the real and ordinary world. The film *Spirited Away* fits into the theme of “departure → initiation → return” pattern, in which an individual leaves his/her current world to travel and steps into a special world to encounter a series of unexpected adventure (Randles, 2012). As a monomyth, the film is filled with metaphoric symbols, allegories, and images with profound significance and implications. Campbell's monomyth has greatly influenced popular culture; his hero narratives have also influenced the film and literature study (Vogler, 2007). The three monomythic phases and seventeen steps in terms of Campbell's mythic structure of monomyth are briefly illustrated below.

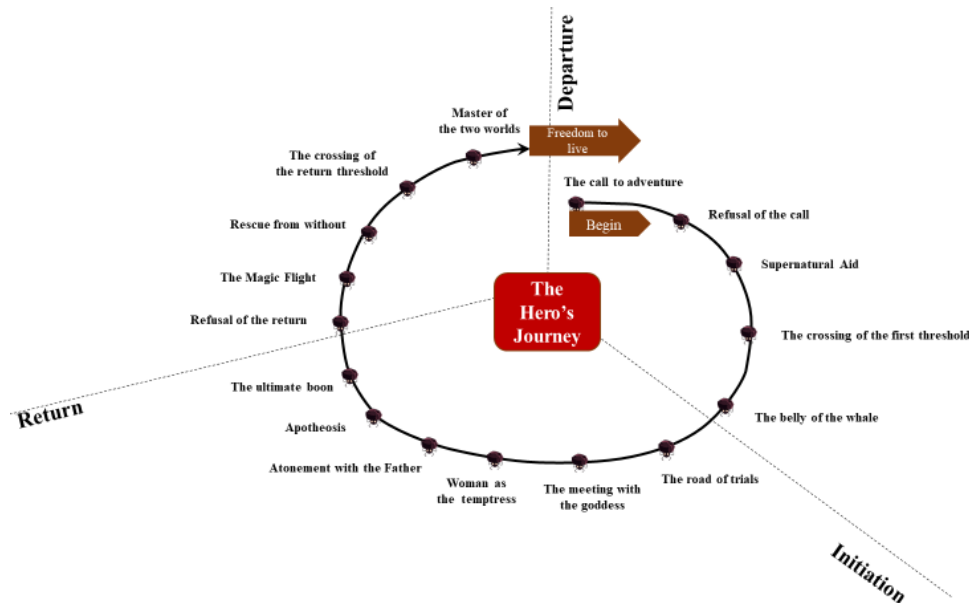


Figure 1. the seventeen interconnected stages of a hero's departure–initiation–return journey

Monomyth—phase one: departure

Campbell (1949, 2008, & 2014) divided this first phase of the hero's journey into five stages: *the call to adventure*, *refusal of the call*, *supernatural aid*, *the crossing of the first threshold*, and *the belly of the whale*. When the protagonist must embark on an unknown journey, his intuition may advise him against the journey itself; naturally, he may be fearful of his unpredictable circumstances. Thus, the hero wanders around until supernatural aid pushes him to cross the first threshold and sink into the supernatural world, where adventure awaits. At this moment, the hero



leaves his ordinary world and ventures into a dangerous realm where everything is unknown, much like being in the belly of a whale. The *belly of the whale* stage represents the final separation from the old world. By entering this stage, the hero shows a willingness to undergo a series of challenges or quests (Campbell, 1949, 2008, & 2014).

The call to adventure; refusal of the call

The *call to adventure* stage is the first crucial stage in the mythological journey (Campbell, 1949, 2008, & 2014) whereby the hero, through some unknown external change, is summoned to embark on a new journey. Having left the comfort zone of his ordinary world, the hero is forced to experience a series of terrifying, evil challenges.

In *Spirited Away*, as Chihiro and her parents are driving to their new town, she discovers some shrines beside the road. She also finds a stone statue in the underbrush, which foreshadows the call to adventure, implying that Chihiro's family is crossing the border between the ordinary world (reality) and the supernatural world.

Chihiro: What are those little houses?

Mother: They're shrines. People pray to them.

Chihiro: Daddy, are we lost?

Father: We're fine, we've got 4-wheel drive. Sit down, Chihiro.

Mother: You're going to kill us!

Father: A tunnel?

Mother: What's this strange building?

Father: Must be the entrance. (Miyazaki, 2001, 00:02:20-00:03:19)

On the way to their new home, Chihiro's father takes a wrong turn and drives onto a narrow path, full of trees and shrines. Unexpectedly, the car almost runs into a mysterious stone statue on the path, and behind the statue lies an ancient stone tunnel. The process from taking a wrong turn to encountering the mysterious stone statue, the symbol of a supernatural god, refers to the call to adventure. In myths and cinematic narratives, mysterious tunnels, holes, and caves are used as a bridge to the unconscious or the supernatural world (Vollmar, 2007). Thus, with curiosity, Chihiro's parents' step into the tunnel; however, Chihiro, a timid girl, is unwilling to enter the tunnel, refusing the call of adventure.

The *refusal of the call* stage presents the stage in which the hero, with fear or insecurity, refuses the call to embark on the journey. Sometimes, the journey may be obstructed by external forces. Campbell (1949, 2008, & 2014) noted that *refusal of the call* casts a negative connotation toward the journey, allowing the protagonist to lose the chance to grow up or experience rebirth.

In *Spirited Away*, a fearful Chihiro has no intention of embarking on an adventure in the tunnel. Hence, while her parents stepped inside, she just stood at the mouth of the tunnel, begging them not to go further.

Mother: Honey. Let's go back, honey.

Chihiro: It's creepy. Daddy, let's go back.

Father: No need to be scared. Just a little farther, OK?



Mother: The moving van'll get there before us.

Father: So, let 'em, they've got the keys. Let the movers move us.

Mother: I know, but...

Chihiro: No! I won't go. Daddy, let's go back. (Miyazaki, 2001, 00:03:22-00:04:09)

At first, Chihiro tries to urge her father to return to the car. However, her parents insist on walking through the tunnel to see the *other* side. Although frightened, in the end, Chihiro chooses to remain with her parents—she is more frightened of being alone. Being timid, Chihiro is too afraid to wait outside by herself and stay with the mysterious stone statue that makes her so uncomfortable. Thus, she plucks up her courage to walk into the tunnel, a passage to the supernatural world.

In terms of psychoanalysis, refusing the call for adventure indicates one's willingness to be bound by the walls of childhood, hence losing the chance to move past infantile ego and internalize aspects of reality, thus failing to reach the full reality of living and dying (Guntrip, 1969). In order for Chihiro to complete her self-individuation journey, she must enter the tunnel.

Supernatural aid

After the hero accepts the call of adventure and embarks on the journey, either willingly or reluctantly, he first encounters the so-called *supernatural aid*, a symbolic *rescuer* that protects him and helps him to survive various tasks and ordeals during the adventure. Hence, the *supernatural aid* serves as a protective figure—an old man, an old crone, a wizard, a hermit, or a shepherd—who provides guidance, advice, and even confidence as the hero struggles to overcome his fears on the threshold of the adventure and, later, during a series of trials (Campbell, 1949, 2008, & 2014). Metaphorically, the *supernatural aid* also includes other mentors who provide physical or spiritual assistance to motivate the hero during the journey.

For instance, when Chihiro is reluctant to enter the tunnel, a blast of wind arises as a supernatural aid and blows her into the tunnel, thus beginning her adventure.

Chihiro: The wind's going in.

Mother: What is it?

Father: Let's have a look. There's a way through.

Mother: Chihiro, you wait in the car.

Chihiro: Mommy, wait. (Miyazaki, 2001, 00:03:44-00:04:27)

The blast of wind, like the mysterious stone statue, serves as the supernatural aid to send Chihiro into the tunnel and to the unknown supernatural world.

Haku, the spirit of the Kohaku River, also serves as a natural aid to help Chihiro with various trials during the adventure. Aware that Chihiro's parents have been bewitched and turned into pigs, Haku, originally a river god, tries to comfort Chihiro, letting her know that he will help her and saying, "*Don't be afraid, I'm a friend*" (*ibid.*, 00:14:59-00:15:01). Also, Haku advises Chihiro to sign a contract with Yubaba, a metaphorical sorcerer, to work at the *bath house*, a place "*where 8 million gods can rest their weary bones*" (*ibid.*, 00:36:48-00:36:54). By working at



the *bath house*, Chihiro may have a chance to rescue her parents, break the spell, and escape the supernatural world.

Crossing the first threshold; belly of the whale

With the guidance of his rescuers, the hero sets off in search of his identity and broadens his vision of reality. Campbell (1949, 2008, & 2014) states that the guidance of supernatural aid leads the hero to the first threshold, which represents the limitations of the hero's current domain or life vision. The threshold separates two different worlds: the human/ordinary world and the supernatural world, a world full of gods, spirits, ghosts, and phantoms. After crossing the threshold, the hero will encounter a metaphorical *threshold guard*, warning him of the danger of crossing the boundary (Campbell, 1949, 2008, & 2014).

When Chihiro walks to the bridge, leaving behind her parents, who are still human at this point and devouring a delicious buffet, Haku arrives at the bridge and warns her not to cross the river lest she be trapped there forever: “*You're not allowed here. Go back! It's almost night! Leave before it gets dark*” (Miyazaki, 2001, 00:11:21-00:11:25). Afterward, to prevent Chihiro from vanishing in the supernatural world and losing the chance to save her parents, Haku offers her the magic berry in his hand.

Haku: Don't be afraid. I'm a friend.

Chihiro: NO, no, no.

Haku: Open your mouth and eat this.

Haku: Unless you eat something from this world, you'll vanish.

(Miyazaki, 2001, 00:14:54-00:15:01)

Somewhat like a good angel or a protective figure, Haku warns Chihiro not to wander past the boundary; once she enters the supernatural world, she will have no means of escape. However, in order to save her parents, who have been turned into pigs and whipped, Chihiro has no choice but to cross the second boundary, the bridge, and enter the *belly of the whale* stage, where she must overcome a series of trials, as well as her own fear, so as to break the spell and save her parents.

The *belly of the whale* refers to the stage in which the hero sinks into an unknown region, as a projection of the unconscious (Campbell, 1949, 2008, & 2014). Successfully passing through the passage of the magical threshold, the *belly of the whale*, symbolizing the womb, implies a transition into a sphere of rebirth or transformation (Khoury, 2006). The darkness within the belly (the womb) symbolizes the unknown world, death, or self-annihilation. However, once the hero conquers all the challenges, his emergence from the belly (the womb) symbolizes the birth, or rebirth, of the hero. It should also be noted that, by entering the *belly* (the symbolic womb), the hero, instead of moving beyond the boundary of the physical world, moves inward, toward his own origin—the womb—to seek the possibility of rebirth and regeneration (Campbell, 1949, 2008, & 2014).

In *Spirited Away*, the *bath house* is the symbolic womb, as well as *belly of the whale*. Upon entering the *bath house*, in order to seek rebirth, Chihiro must use her wisdom during all of the trials; otherwise, she will experience self-annihilation. In order to rescue her parents, Chihiro has to find a job at the *bath house*. Upon first seeing the *bath house* owner Yubaba, the metaphorical sorcerer figure, Chihiro,



timid and trembling, is terrified of his intimidating looks. However, Chihiro displays courage, persistence, and commitment by securing a job at the *bath house*, repeatedly imploring, “Please let me work here”; “I want to work here!”; “Please let me work!” (Miyazaki, 2001, 00:37:46-00:37:51). With perseverance, ultimately Chihiro gets the job and hence enters the *bath house*. Sinking into the *bath house*, a symbolic *belly of the whale*, Chihiro is ready to face various challenges, meet her allies as well as her enemies, and most importantly, start her initiation.

Monomyth—phase two: initiation

Campbell (1949, 2008, & 2014) divided the initiation phase into six stages: *the road of trials*, *the meeting with the goddess*, *woman as the temptress*, *atonement with the father*, *apotheosis*, and *the ultimate boon*. After crossing the threshold, the hero is destined to follow the road of trials, a journey full of unpredictable and magical encounters. This is also the most fascinating stage in the whole monomyth. In this initiation phase, the hero receives a variety of challenges and trials, meets with the goddess to experience what love is, and encounters material temptations to hold him back from his journey. The most crucial part of the initiation phase occurs when the hero reaches the *atonement with the father* stage, that is, he reaches the deepest part of the mythical *cave*, which refers to the most dangerous ordeals, conflicts, and challenges in the adventure. In this stage, the hero learns to overcome all these obstacles so as to acquire wisdom, love, empathy, and bliss, and hence reach the stage of *apotheosis*. The hero may not be successful in every trial, but the most important thing is that, through the journey, he never gives up or accepts defeat, hence receiving *the ultimate boon* as the reward or treasure.

The road of trials

Once venturing on the initiation journey, the hero must undergo *the road of trials*, an initial stage to bring about his transformation. This is the stage where the hero's wisdom, courage, resourcefulness, and resilience or power will be tested. Through the confrontations, trials, or obstacles during the adventure, the hero can gain a deeper insight into himself and identify with himself. According to Campbell (1949, 2008, & 2014), during the dark, dangerous, and difficult task on the road of trials, the hero enters his own mental labyrinth. Ultimately, the hero learns to submit himself to the supernatural world, reaching a purgation or surrender, or a compromise.

In order to survive at the *bath house* so as to save her parents, Chihiro must restrain herself and tolerate Yubaba's scornful tone as he humiliates her and her parents, calling her “a useless weakling,” “a lazy, spoiled, crybaby,” “stupid to boot,” and so forth (Miyazaki, 2001, 00:36:11-00:37:39). Moreover, she must discard her real name, a symbol of identity, in order to keep her job at the *bath house*. In addition to submitting to verbal humiliation and relinquishing her name and identity, Chihiro endures physical labor at the *bath house* in order to meet the demanding requests of her exploitative boss, Yubaba. For instance, she has to be tough enough to clean a *Stink God* to get rid of his filth. Though being tortured physically and mentally, Chihiro's efforts are rewarded. For instance, while cleaning the *Stink God*, she finds a thorn stuck in him, so she tugs all of the miscellaneous objects out of his body and discovers that the *Stink God* is actually a



River God. In appreciation of Chihiro's helpfulness, the *River God* rewards her with a magic emetic dumpling, a soul-cleansing food.

Meeting with the goddess; woman as temptress

While confronting a series of difficult tasks and challenges, the hero will meet his allies and enemies, both serving as crucial roles for the hero's journey. However, the hero should have the ability to recognize who can be trusted and who cannot, as what Campbell (1949, 2008, & 2014) said meeting the goddess and women as temptress. However, in a monomyth, the *goddess* in the *meeting with the goddess* stage is not necessarily female, but a figure connected to love, warmth, protection, nourishment, and other positive characteristics. In *Spirited Away*, during her adventure, Chihiro meets Haku, Kamaji, and Lin, who are metaphorical *goddesses* who help her.

If there is a *queen goddess* serving as a good mother image, there must also be a bad mother image representing lust and temptation, as with the incest of Oedipus (Campbell, 1949, 2008, & 2014). Yubaba also makes enemies, or *temptresses*, such as Yubaba, with a large mole on her third eye and an obsession with gold and money. Yubaba forces her to do difficult daily chores at the *bath house*. In the *woman as the temptress stage*, the hero encounters temptations in the form of disguised witches, sirens, and sorcerers, who distract him from the ultimate quest. These temptations—which can be a human being, an object, an event, or even food—may try to lead the hero astray, convince him to abandon his adventure, or, even worse, bring about his self-annihilation or death. Those who cannot resist temptation remain in the supernatural world, as with Chihiro's parents, who were bewitched into becoming pigs.

Mother: Come in, Chihiro, it looks delicious.

Father: Hello, anybody there?

Mother: Oh, don't worry. We can pay them when they get back.

Father: You're right. That one looks great.

Mother: I wonder what this is called.

Delicious! Chihiro, taste it.

Chihiro: I don't want to! Let's go! They're gonna be mad at us. (Miyazaki, 2001, 00:08:32-00:08:55)

Chihiro's gluttonous parents fail to resist the food temptation, eating too much and hence being turned into pigs. In contrast, Chihiro politely resists the food temptation and wanders around until she bumps into Haku, a *threshold guardian* who warns her of the dangers of leaving the parental protection and of stepping into the unknown world.

In addition to resisting food temptations, Chihiro also must resist the temptation of gold. For instance, Chihiro is offered gold at one point, but she does not covet others' property, so she refuses the offer. Recall that Chihiro also had to confront Yubaba, her exploitative boss at the bath house. Yubaba is a metaphorical symbol of the *woman as the temptress*. While working at the *bath house*, Chihiro also confronts varied trials and enemies which attempt to dissuade her from attaining her goal. Unquestionably, Yubaba is a metaphorical symbol of crone and sorceress, as Haku says that "*If you [Chihiro] don't work, Yubaba will turn you into an animal*"; "*She's the sorceress who rules our world*" (*ibid.*, 00:19:31-00:19:36).



Atonement with the Father

In the *atonement with the father* stage, the hero finds himself in a position or a place—a symbolic *abyss*—of terrible danger or inner conflict regarding a life-or-death crisis. *Father* in this stage refers to a metaphorical symbol of someone (such as a god) or something (such as death) holding power over the hero. Only by resolving conflict and opposition—as the id–ego–superego, life–death, human–supernatural, and the conscious and the unconscious—does the hero have a chance to reach a metaphorical rebirth and reach the completion of his journey (Campbell, 1949, 2008, & 2014). However, while confronting these conflicts and oppositions, the hero first must overcome his deepest fear and manage to embrace the conflicts or oppositions, so as to resolve them and hence reach his ultimate regeneration.

In a monomyth, the *father* may also symbolize a person, either a man or a woman, who holds strong or divine power. In *Spirited Away*, No Face is a metaphorical figure of the *father*, who has the amazing power to make gold himself; indeed, “Gold springs from his palms” (Miyazaki, 2001, 01:14:48-01:14:49). Initially seeing No Face standing in the rain, with empathy, Chihiro kindly asks him, “Aren’t you... getting wet?” (*ibid.*, 00:53:04) and leaves the door open to let him come inside the bath house. However, she does not want his gratitude. A lonely entity who becomes fond of Chihiro, No Face intends to use gold to buy her, but she replies, “*I don’t want any. Don’t need any. I’m busy, please excuse me*” (*ibid.*, 01:15:51-01:15:57). Eager to receive love from others, No Face conjures gold in order to get attention and love. However, when Chihiro’s fellow workers see the gold, they manage to take it, leaving No Face alone. Hence, No Face, lonely and eager for love, becomes irritated by their greed; he turns into a *horrible monster* and devours “two frogs and a slug” (*ibid.*, 01:30:24-01:30:27). Afterward, with blood on his mouth, he swallows two more workers who interrupted his conversation with Chihiro. Everyone except Chihiro becomes terrified of No Face, afraid of being eaten by the *horrible monster*.

Afterward, Chihiro tells No Face that he cannot give her what she wants: a way to save her parents and Haku.

No Face: Come over here, Sen. What is it you want? You can tell me.

Chihiro: Where did you come from? There’s someplace I have to go right away. You can’t help me with what I want (*ibid.*, 01:33:11-01:33:17)

In addition to No Face, Zeniba represents a metaphorical *father* figure with strong or divine power. She uses her power to cast a spell and transform Yubaba’s son, Boh, and her bird into a mouse and a little fly, respectively. Also, after learning that her sister Yubaba sent Haku to her house to steal a precious seal, in a fury, she gravely injures Haku. In order to rescue Haku and pacify Zeniba’s fury, Chihiro volunteers to go to the marsh bottom, a symbolic *abyss*, or the unconscious, to return the precious seal and beg Zaniba to forgive Haku. Taking the train running on the water to the marsh bottom represents Chihiro’s descent into the darkness of the symbolic *abyss* and the conflicts and oppositions of the id–ego–superego, life–death, human–supernatural, and so forth. If Chihiro can resolve these well, she can reach self-rejuvenation; if not, self-annihilation will be the end result.



After her trek to the marsh bottom, Chihiro reaches a crucial life-and-death point, the most dangerous encounter with a *father* figure: Zeniba, sister of the *temptress* Yubaba. In order to save Haku, Chihiro bravely confronts Zeniba, although she is filled with fear. At this point, Chihiro has surpassed her formerly self-concerned ego, that is, she has transcended her ego and reached her highest self. According to Campbell (1949, 2008, & 2014), once a hero encounters the critical life-and-death ordeal, if he can apply all he has to resolve it, he will be purified and reach the *apotheosis* stage.

Apotheosis; the ultimate boon

After a favorable climax and successfully resolving the dangerous encounter with the life-and-death crucial point, the hero finally reaches the *apotheosis* stage—the purification of the self. According to Campbell (1949, 2008, & 2014), when a hero has gone through the last terror of ignorance, he frees himself of fear and gains wisdom. The hero is transformed into a godlike being, that is, he is in a state of *apotheosis*. Chihiro has been too timid to face anything herself. However, once she discovers that Haku is going to die from his serious injuries, she becomes aware of the confrontation of death and realizes that fortune cannot fix everything. Indeed, she remarks to No Face that, although he can make and provide her with gold, he cannot help Haku and her parents to survive.

With love and altruism, in order to save Haku, Chihiro takes the *magic emetic dumpling* she has saved for her parents and splits it in half to feed Haku in order to keep him alive. Moreover, empathetic to No Body, who has become a *horrible monster*, Chihiro offers him the other half of the *magic emetic dumpling*, allowing the transformed *horrible monster* to become normal again. At this moment, Chihiro is willing to sacrifice and contribute to others. This scene is further evidence that she has already transcended to her highest self.

In addition, Chihiro attains wisdom, in the form of a *boon* or elixir, from Zeniba. Zeniba, Yubaba's twin sister, turns out to be a metaphorical symbol of a goddess, a figure with kindness, as shown when Zeniba tells Chihiro, "*Yubaba and I are two halves of a whole, but we don't get along*" (Miyazaki, 2001, 01:49:34-01:49:37). In order to give Chihiro the courage to move forward, Zeniba and Chihiro's companions, No Face, Boh (still a mouse), and Yubaba's bird (still a little fly), weave a lucky ribbon for Chihiro as a blessing and amulet. The ribbon represents a reward from her ordeal. Moreover, Zeniba enlightens Chihiro about the life-and-death issue. Earlier When Chihiro returned the seal to Zeniba and asks her to save her parents, Zeniba says:

Zeniba: I'd like to help you, dear, but there's nothing I can do. It's one of our rules here. You've got to take care of your parents and that dragon boyfriend of yours, on your own.

Chihiro: But, um, can't you even give me a hint? I feel like Haku and I met, a long time ago.

Zeniba: In that case, it's easy. Nothing that happens, is ever forgotten, even if you can't remember it. (ibid., 01:50:06-01:50:31)



As a goddess figure, Zeniba gives Chihiro advice, inspiring her to be independent and solve her own problems and explaining that Chihiro saved Haku on her own, so she can save her parents on her own, too.

After confronting the crucial life-and-death crisis, saving Haku, and helping Boh and Yubaba's bird to be transformed back to a baby and a bird, the heroine Chihiro has finally gone through the *apotheosis* stage, as she has overcome her greatest personal fear and challenge. After meeting the crucial life-and-death ordeal, at this moment, Chihiro becomes a triumphant heroine, with the *ultimate boon*, here symbolized by the wisdom and lucky ribbon Zeniba gives her.

Following the *apotheosis* stage, the hero achieves his goal and reaches self-purification, hence coming to the last stage of the initiation phase: the *ultimate boon* stage, which symbolizes the glory of ultimate transformation. The *ultimate boon* is the hero's holy grail, or the elixir of life or immortality, a metaphorical symbol of the achievement of the goal, meaning that the hero finally receives what he wants in this world (Campbell, 1949, 2008, & 2014).

Boons can arise throughout a monomyth. As previously mentioned, Chihiro tried to pull out the thorn from the *Stink God*, who turned out to be an ancient *River God* being polluted by filth and discarded objects. Appreciating what Chihiro did for him, the ancient *River God* gave her a *magic emetic dumpling* as a *boon* for having freed him so that he could return to his original identity. Also, all of the workers at the *bath house* celebrated Chihiro's success in cleaning the River Spirit and receiving a prize from the *River God*. The reward and the praise from her partners and Yubaba also served as a symbolic *boon* and *elixir*.

Monomyth—phase three: return

Once the hero defeats his enemies, survives death, and overcomes arduous ordeals, he, with his *boon* and reward, is ready to go home, to return to the world of humanity and to use the *boon* he won to bring assistance to his own world. In the return part of the journey, the hero once again crosses the threshold between the two worlds so as to return to the *ordinary world*.

However, sometimes, the hero is unwilling to return to his world. Or, he may not be allowed to leave: the guard of the supernatural world may chase him down. At this moment, the hero may need some outside intervention, such as a *rescue from outside* to help him reach the return part of the journey. After having confronted various challenges and hardships in this journey, the hero has gained wisdom and steps into the *master of the two worlds* stage, symbolizing the hero's transformation and ascent to a higher plane. Based on Campbell's monomyth (1949, 2008, & 2014), there are six stages in the return phase: *refusal of the return*, *the magic flight*, *rescue from without*, *the crossing of the return threshold*, *master of the two worlds*, and *freedom to live*.

Refusal of the return

After the hero-quest journey, with the *ultimate boon* as a reward, the hero must return home so as to improve his own world. However, sometimes, upon reaching the *apostasies* state and spiritual purification as enlightenment, the hero may not want to return to the *ordinary world*, preferring to stay in the *supernatural world*, in his own triumphant state, forever (Campbell, 1949, 2008, & 2014). As afterward Chihiro completes her initiation journey, she is ready on the way to return to her



ordinary world. In order to let Chihiro return to her own world with no difficulty, Haku advises her not to turn back until she gets out of the tunnel in order not to get stuck in this supernatural world.

Haku: I can't go any farther. Go back the way you came, Chihiro. But don't ever look back. Not until you're out of the tunnel.

Chihiro: What about you, Haku?

Haku: I'll speak to Yubaba. Quit my apprenticeship. I'm fine, now that I have my name back. I'll go back to my world, too.

Chihiro: Can we meet again?

Haku: I'm sure.

Chihiro: Promise?

Haku: Promise. Now go, and don't look back. (Miyazaki, 2001, 01:58:15-01:57:37)

During the return to her world, Chihiro must walk back on her own, following the original road. When she is about to enter the tunnel, she stops, intending to turn around to see Haku. Immediately, however, she thinks of Haku's smile and his warning. Instead of turning back, symbolizing a refusal of the return, she takes a deep breath and keeps going out of the tunnel. Otherwise, she would be stuck in the supernatural world.

The magic flight, rescue from without, and crossing the return threshold

After the hero accomplishes his tasks, he returns triumphantly to the ordinary world, bringing his *ultimate boon* back home. If, on the way home, he wins the blessings or support of a supernatural force, he encounters no difficulty on the return to his own world. However, if the gift, or *boon*, is stolen from a god/goddess, the hero is pursued. Hence, in order to escape pursuit and reach the *ordinary world*, the hero must use his wisdom; this is the so-called *magic flight* in a monomyth. In other words, to get back to his own world, the hero has to rescue himself. In addition, if the supernatural force does not allow the hero to leave, the hero may need others' assistance to help him escape the *supernatural world*. Or, sometimes, if success in the supernatural world makes it difficult for the hero to return to his own world, he will need someone or something to push him back into his ordinary world (Campbell, 1949, 2008, & 2014). That is to say, he may need assistance from without to complete his journey and regeneration and use the *boon*, symbolized as an elixir or panacea, to provide restoration to his own world.

As Chihiro and her party safely return to the *bath house*, the *bath house* owner, Yubaba, is ecstatic because her baby son, Boh, is safe. However, Yubaba has no intention of letting Chihiro and her parents leave. Hence, in order to help them return to their world smoothly, Haku and Boh act as the *rescue from without*, reminding Yubaba to keep her promise, saying, "*Yubaba, you promised. Please return Chihiro's family to the human world*" (Miyazaki, 2001, 01:55:53-01:55:58). Yubaba promised that, once Chihiro returned Boh, she would turn Chihiro's parents back into human beings and let them all return to their world.

However, before leaving, in order for her parents to become human beings again, Chihiro has to meet the last task—that is, she must go to the pig pen and pick out her parents, so as to break Yubaba's spell.



Yubaba: You only get one guess. Get it right, and you're all free.
Chihiro: Granny, this is no good. My parents aren't here.
Yubaba: Not here?! That's your answer?
Chihiro: Yes.
Everyone: Bingo! (ibid., 01:55:54-01:57:39)

Ultimately, with wisdom, Chihiro wins the challenge, and Yubaba keeps her promise to free Chihiro and her parents.

After confronting various hardships and winning his victory in his triumphant journey, with wisdom and reward, the hero has to go back to his ordinary world (Campbell, 1949, 2008, & 2014). As Chihiro completes her initiation journey, she is ready on the way to return to her *ordinary world*. The last juncture of the hero's journey involves crossing the return threshold, which is also the most important part of the whole journey. If a hero fails to cross this return threshold successfully, he will be held forever in the supernatural world, just as Haku told Chihiro. Crossing the abandoned theme park to the tunnel symbolizes the *crossing of the return threshold*.

Master of the two worlds; freedom to live

Once the hero has crossed the return threshold, he will be able to travel freely through the two worlds, which is actually one world with two domains. According to Campbell (1949, 2008, & 2014), the two different worlds—the divine and the human world—can be described as two different domains: life and death, day and night, the conscious and the unconscious. While the hero adventures into the darkness, he may be led astray, imprisoned, or endangered. However, whoever accomplishes their ordeals will return to the human world. After that, he will be able to see the two different worlds—the supernatural and the ordinary world—as one whole and gain the freedom to live in both. In other words, the hero has resolved his conflicts in the material and spiritual world, or the inner and outer world. In reaching a balance between these two worlds, the hero has also experienced his rebirth and regeneration. Afterward, he can freely live in the two worlds as he steps into the *freedom to live* stage, the final stage of the hero's journey.

After overcoming the challenges of the supernatural world, the hero has developed insights to begin his new life, willing to succumb to reality. As Campbell (1949, 2008, & 2014) noted, the hero has discarded his infantile ego and transcended his ego to a higher plane. Moreover, his return may bring a solution or a restoration, as an *elixir*, to benefit his ordinary world.

Upon seeing her parents whom she worked so hard to save, she runs to hug them, with tears almost bursting out of her eyes. They walk together through the tunnel. Though the tunnel is as dark as before, Chihiro is no longer scared to face her future.

Mother: Come on, Chihiro. Let's get to our new home.
Father: You're not scared, are you?
Mother: Don't be afraid, honey. Everything's gonna be okay.
Father: A new home and a new school? It is a bit scary.
Chihiro: I think I can handle it. (Miyazaki, 2001, 02:00:15-02:00:44)



After going through the separation–initiation–return journey, the ten-year-old timid girl has transformed into a girl with inner courage and wisdom. Moreover, during her adventures, she empathized with others' situations, was willing to sacrifice to help them, and was grateful to those who gave her a hand. In the end, Chihiro became enlightened and hence finished her self-individuation journey.

Conclusion

It is a prerequisite for a hero to experience a transformation. Through the hero's journey in a monomyth, despite people all over the world having different civilizations and cultures, there is a similarity among human beings—all of us are destined to experience a journey of separation→initiation→return to reach enlightenment and self-individuation. This study uses Campbell's monomyth to analyze how Chihiro, a ten-year-old girl in *Spirited Away* (2001), wanders into a supernatural world and is trapped there, where she must use her resources to survive. While wandering into the *supernatural world*, Chihiro learns to empathize, love, and appreciate others during her journey, and hence, she completes her monomyth cycle. With empathy, love, and persistence, she wins her decisive victory, bringing a *boon* to this ordinary world, which brings restoration to her family and community.

References

- Beggan, J. K. (2016). Monomyth, transformation and inspiration: The hero's journey in the extreme fitness exercise infomercial. *Heroism Science*, 1(1), Article 3.
- Błocian, I. (2015). Philosophical and psychological aspects in Jung's conception of myth. The Schellingian influence. *Studia Religiologica*, 48(3), s. pp. 217-22.
- Campbell, J. (1949). *The hero with a thousand faces*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Campbell, J. (1993). *Myths to live by*. NY: Penguin Compass.
- Campbell, J. (2002). *The inner reaches of outer space*. Novato, California: New World Library.
- Campbell, J. (2008). *The hero with a thousand faces* (3rd ed.). Novato, CA: New World Library.
- Campbell, J. (2014). *The hero's journey: Joseph Campbell on his life and work*. Novato, CA: New World Library.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013) *Research design qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). London: Sage.
- Dundes, A. (1984). *Sacred narrative, readings in the theory of myth*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chicago.



- Guntrip, H. (1969). *Schizoid phenomena, object-relations and the self*. New York: International Universities Press.
- Guerin, W., Labor, E., Morgan, L., Reesman, J., Willingham, J. (2010). *Handbook of critical approaches to literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jung, C. G. (1990). *The archetypes and the collective unconscious*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Khoury, Y. K. (2006). "To be or not to be" in "the belly of the whale": A reading of Joseph Campbell's "Modern Hero" hypothesis in Hamlet on film. *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 34, pp.120-129.
- Leeming, David. A. (2011). *The Oxford companion to world mythology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Levi-Strauss, C. (1955). The structural study of myth. *The Journal of American Folklore*, 68(270), pp.428-444.
- Miyazaki, H. (2001). *Spirited Away* [film]. Tokyo: Toho.
- Neuman, W. L. (2007). *Basic of social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches (2nd Ed.)*. Boston: Pearson Education Inc.
- Palumbo, D. (2014). *The monomyth in American science fiction films: 28 visions of the hero's journey*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc.
- Randles, C. (2012). The "Hero's Journey": A way of viewing music teacher socialization. *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 22(1), pp.11-19.
- Segal, R. A. (1978). Joseph Campbells theory of myth: An essay review of his *Oeuvre*. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 46(1), p. 67.
- Spence, L. (2004). *An introduction to mythology*. New York: Cosimo, Inc.
- Vogler, C. (2007). *The writer's journey: Mythic structures for writers* (3rd ed.). Studio City, CA: Michael Wise Productions.
- Vollmar, K. (2007). *Little giant encyclopedia: Dream symbols*. New York, NY: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc.

