

Mythmaking in Star Wars V

Monomyth Structure, Part II

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Stages of the Monomyth, Continued

In our last article, we explored the stages of the monomyth as they apply to the first half of a story, encompassing the first act and first-half of the second act. Here we will complete our exploration of the final stages of the monomyth, so that you can use this structure to build your own epic and enduring stories.

To review, at the heart of the monomyth is the structure of the story. Each Hero, regardless of who he is and the setting in which he lives, follows a similar path. This structure has existed in mythology for generations and it speaks to us. It resonates with the human condition and what it takes to truly overcome and persevere. When we experience a story that utilizes the structure of the monomyth, it occurs to us as meaningful and epic. We identify with the Heroes and join them on what is most like the adventure of a lifetime.

Again, the important thing to keep in mind is to not take the titles of the stages too literally – instead, study the spirit of what they represent. When you are creating your *Star Wars* roleplaying story, knowing how to broadly implement these stages will allow you to use the monomyth over and over again, with it never appearing the same way twice.

Act II (Part)

Things really start to happen in the first half of Act II. The Hero begins to uncover pieces of the puzzle (or come closer to the ultimate goal by steps) by overcoming hurdles one at a time. Every step along the way builds the drama of the story.

8. *Mother as Goddess*

Once conditions have changed (the Midpoint), the Hero has a moment where one of two things might happen. He may experience some kind of connection with an opposite sex figure that allows him to unite his masculine and feminine sides, or to simply mature. He may also experience a kind of total love that alters his world, similar to the kind of love an infant might feel from his mother.

In *A New Hope*, Luke Skywalker has a crush on Princess Leia that intensifies when they meet face to face in the Death Star's detention block. This forces him to man up ways he had not previously. Fortunately, he does not know she's his sister yet.

In *The Phantom Menace*, Obi-Wan Kenobi experiences the love Shmi Skywalker has for her young son, Anakin. She is willing to let him go off into the galaxy to have a better life and make a difference, even though she can't come with and will most likely never see him again.

In *Knights of the Old Republic*, Revan experiences the love of Elora for her Jedi husband Sunry. She continues to love him, even though he was having an affair with a Dark Jedi and was also guilty of killing her in cold blood. If love like this can exist, then Revan can be redeemed.

9. *Woman as Temptress*

The special world is not content to leave the Hero to his experience of union or love. Temptations arrive that attempt to lead the Hero from his path, to a path that might destroy him or remove him from the equation. In *Star Wars*, as many Heroes are Jedi, this is often represented by the lure of the Dark Side of the Force.

Luke Skywalker must deal with his first experience with the Dark Side of the Force on the Death Star, through Darth Vader. Though it does not immediately tempt him, it is the shades of things to come.

Obi-Wan Kenobi has his first true experience with the Dark Side, as Darth Maul attacks on Tatooine. Though Obi-Wan isn't tempted immediately, Maul represents the thing against which he must be wary.

Revan travels to the Sith homeworld of Korriban and experiences the pull of the Dark Side through the Sith Academy and in the tombs of the Dark Lords. It is a world of his own creation, calling for him to return.

10. Atonement with the Father

Finally, the Hero meets the point to which the entire journey has been building. This is where the Hero must confront the ultimate power of his journey in the special world. This ultimate power doesn't always need to be a person – it can also be a thing or some kind of event.

On the Death Star, Luke must confront the overwhelming forces of the Empire as they try to escape. He witnesses the confrontation between Ben Kenobi and Darth Vader, as the former apprentice exacts a decades-old vendetta.

As Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon finally overcome the trials of Tatooine in order to get back into the real story afoot, Darth Maul appears without warning and attacks. He is the most dangerous foe they have ever fought, and also represents a much bigger threat to the galaxy.

Revan finally finishes facing the shades and tombs of the Dark Lords of Korriban to find the final Star Map. He now knows the secret location of the Star Forge.

11. Apotheosis

Because of his experience confronting the ultimate power, death enters the picture. Sometimes the Hero is transformed by the threat of death or the experience of another's death. Sometimes someone close to him transcends death to move onto the world of the spirit. Sometimes, death is represented by a lull, the eye of the storm, where there is a period of rest. Sometimes it is several elements of the above.

Luke quickly becomes no stranger to death. He is transformed by the death of Ben Kenobi (though he is transformed into spirit) and by the threat of his own death. He is no longer the brash farm boy – he is becoming something else.

Obi-Wan is confronted by a manifestation of death – Darth Maul. His experience with the Sith changes him.

Revan is confronted by his own death, or at least the death of his identity as a Dark Lord of the Sith. He finally makes a choice – be who he was or who he has become.

12. The Ultimate Boon

Through his trials, confronting the ultimate power, and apotheosis, the Hero has earned the thing that brought him to the special world in the first place. He has attained the Holy Grail of his adventure, the thing that makes all the difference.

R2-D2 and Princess Leia in hand, Luke heads back with the plans to the Death Star to save the day.

All the pieces fall into place for Obi-Wan. All that is left is to help Queen Amidala return to Naboo to rescue her people from the predations of the Trade Federation.

Revan discovers the location of the Star Forge and how to get there.

Act III

This act is for building to the ultimate point of the story and for wrapping up loose ends. The Heroes should experience increased tribulations, to the point at which they are not sure how they are supposed to survive or succeed, leading up to the climax – the most important or exciting part of your story. From the climax, they move into the denouement, which should tie up all loose ends and answer most, if not all, questions. In general, everything after the climax should be quick.

13. Refusal of the Return

Now that the Hero has been transformed by his journey, there may a couple of reasons why he wouldn't want to return. He may be excited by his adventure in the special world that he does not want to go back to the ordinary world. Alternatively, he may wonder if he should bring his hard-won ultimate boon back to the ordinary world, who may not be ready for or deserve it.

In *Star Wars*, this typically manifests a little differently. The Hero usually does not have to go back to the ordinary world, but instead make a choice to return to a version of the special world that will become his new ordinary world. What was is gone, but there will be routine in what is to come.

Luke Skywalker joins the Rebel Alliance as a starfighter pilot. This is a far cry from the farm boy he recently was, but he is also no longer a special hero as he was on the Death Star.

Obi-Wan is no longer just the padawan, nor is the intrepid adventurer that has travelled with Qui-Gon. He is now being relied upon to behave as a Jedi Knight and a full-blown warrior.

Revan is no longer an amnesiac soldier, nor is he the heroic adventurer. He is now a Jedi Knight, being relied upon by the Jedi Council to destroy everything he built as a Dark Lord.

14. The Magic Flight

Oftentimes, the journey to return with the boon is as perilous as the journey to get it. Sometimes the Hero has stirred up the hornet's nest by stealing the ultimate boon and the forces guarding it chase him to get it back. This is often the part of the story where an exciting life-or-death chase occurs.

Luke and his friends flee the Death Star, but they are chased by Tie Fighters. They must fend off the Tie Fighters until they can get clear and plot a hyperspace route.

Obi-Wan and his friends must break through the Trade Federation blockade in order to get to Naboo.

Revan and his companions must break through the Sith lines guarding the Star Forge and the planet Rakata.

15. Rescue from Without

When the Hero began his journey, he needed the guidance of a Mentor in order to prepare him properly to survive and succeed. Sometimes the Hero needs powerful guidance or the help of rescuers to get back from his journey. The forces that oppose him may be too great, now that he has stirred up the hornet's nest, or he may have been weakened by his experience in the special world.

Strangely, Darth Vader is actually the thing that rescues Luke and his friends. He lets them go, for he has planted a tracking device on the Millennium Falcon that will lead him to the Rebel's base.

The Gungans are Obi-Wan's rescue. In order for the small band of Naboo security volunteers and the Jedi to infiltrate the palace and capture Nute Gunray, they need the Gungan army to draw out the Trade Federation's army.

Revan receives his rescue from the Rakatans that still hold the old ways. They help him disarm the field that prevents ships from reaching the Star Forge.

16. Crossing of the Return Threshold

Just as he crossed a threshold to get to special world, the Hero must also cross a threshold to get back. This can often be difficult for the Hero, as he is returning to the ordinary world and must accept it as the place he belongs.

Again, in Star Wars, this often manifests a little differently. The Hero is returning to a new ordinary world, distinct from the world in which he began, and he must accept his place in it – which may not be as prominent as the place he occupied in the special world.

Similar to the Refusal of the Call, Luke Skywalker becomes a run-of-the-mill starfighter pilot for the Rebel Alliance, Obi-Wan becomes an agent of the Jedi Council, and Revan becomes a Jedi Knight in service to the Council, not even a general.

17. Master of Two Worlds

The Hero ultimately triumphs because he can master both the world inside of him and the world outside of him, the special world and the ordinary world, the material world and the spiritual world. During the climax, he reaches a new understanding of himself and the things around him.

Luke begins to use the Force in the trenches of the Death Star.

Obi-Wan masters his fear while facing Darth Maul.

Revan masters himself, balancing the Light Side he is with the Dark Side he was.

18. Freedom to Live

The Hero's new understanding and mastery lead him to freedom. He now has the freedom to live as he is no longer afraid of failure or death. Instead of being the Hero of what once was, he becomes the Hero of now and what is to come.

Luke uses the Force to fire the photon torpedo that destroys the Death Star. By doing so, he also begins to resurrect the Jedi tradition.

Obi-Wan conquers his fear and baits Darth Maul into thinking he is defeated – he then kills his assailant. In doing so, he cripples the Sith for the moment and becomes the first guardian against their return.

Revan rejects his old ways to destroy Darth Malak and the Star Forge. He brings an end to the Sith Empire, the very thing he built.

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