

Paper code: NEM04361

The ‘Hero’s Journey’: Personal Resonance as Response to Narrative

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Purpose of the Study

The overall aim of this inquiry was to illuminate the relationships between Joseph Campbell’s (1991) notions of ‘natural response’ and the shared book experiences of a stage three class using the ‘Hero’s Journey’ (Campbell, 1988).

Joseph Campbell (1991) was an American mythologist who analysed and studied myths from around the world. He found that myths are portrayals of narrative and contain a common archetypal pattern of human experience, which he named the ‘Monomyth’, otherwise known as the ‘Hero’s Journey’ (1993). He believed that readers across all cultures and throughout time experience a natural resonance towards the ‘Hero’s Journey’, which encompasses a natural accord with:

narrative

the ‘Hero’s Journey’ pattern

symbolism and archetype

connections between themes in narrative and the readers' own life experiences
a social, spiritual understanding regarding the like experiences of all humankind

Contexts of the Study

Joseph Campbell (1993, p. 3) researched the 'myths' from around the world, encompassing the religions, arts and written stories and found that all are forms of narrative and encompass 'the one shapeshifting, yet marvelously constant story'.

It is essentially the one deed done by many many different people...a certain typical hero sequence of actions which can be detected in stories from all over the world and from many many periods of history.
(Campbell, 1988).

Hence, Campbell (1988) labeled this pattern the 'Hero's Journey' because it reflected the experiences and journey of humankind in life, encompassing the experiences of the hero in narrative and also the hero that is potentially within every person. Consequently, he defined a hero as 'someone who has given his life to something bigger than himself or other than himself' (Campbell, 1988).

The 'Hero's Journey' is a circular pattern of events and experiences that form the very core of narrative. It encompasses an extremely dense and detailed pattern, however as this inquiry is based in the primary classroom, I will be using an abridged version devised by Phil Fitzsimmons (2003) as outlined in figure 1.1 on the following page.

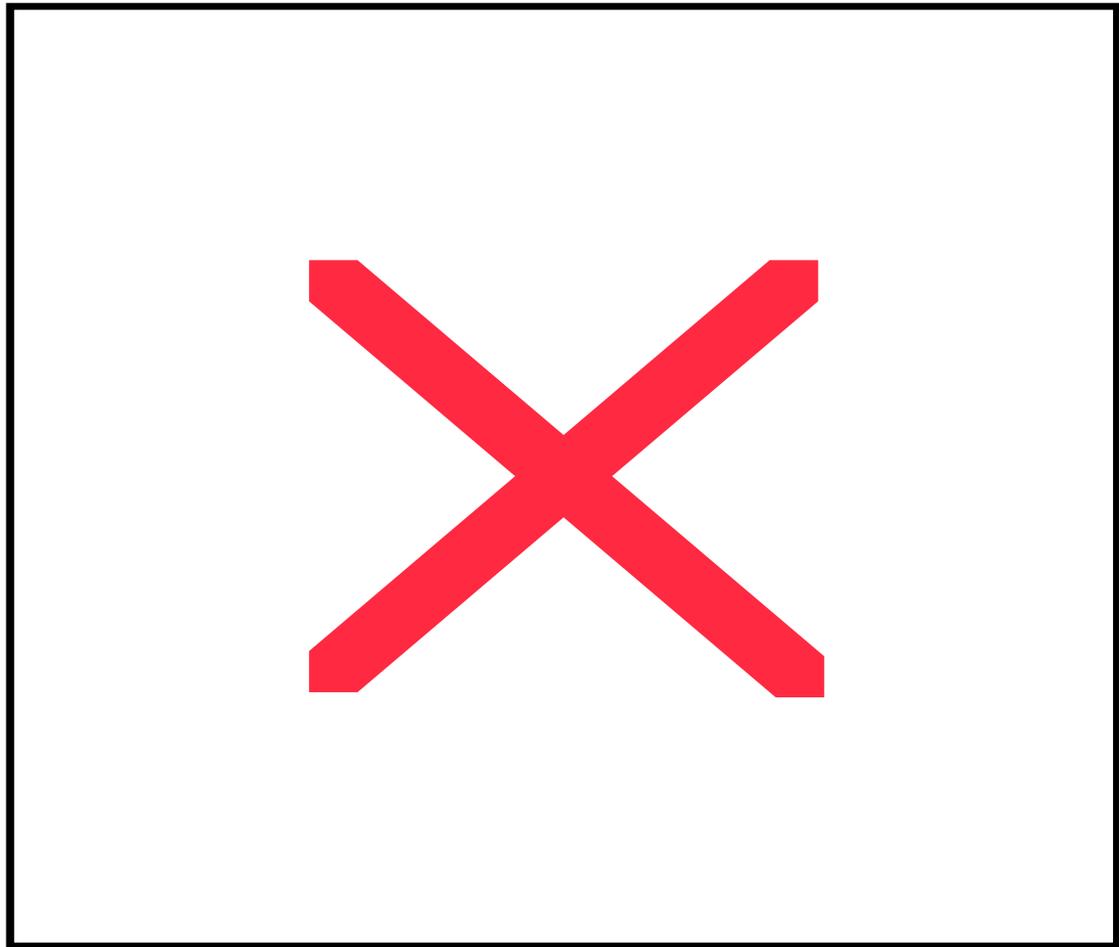


Figure 1.1: The Hero's Journey pattern (Fitzsimmons, 2002).

Campbell (1988) believed that the 'Hero's Journey' has been continually refocused throughout time as the underlying pattern of nearly all narrative because it is the timeless analogous portrayal of humankind's journey in life. Campbell speculated that humankind have an inherent want to read and learn about other people's journeys because the journeys we read are a reflection of our own lives. He believed that when readers recognise the 'Hero's Journey' we experience a natural and unconscious response towards the pattern

because it is archetypal and originates from a shared ‘collective unconscious’ (Campbell, 1993).

Campbell (1993) outlined that the ‘collective unconscious’ is an inherent knowledge that we are not aware of, but is ‘common to at least whole peoples or periods of history’ (Jung, 1912 cited in Campbell, 1991, p. 32). The contents of this ‘collective unconscious’ are archetype, the shared symbols and metaphoric meanings of the human race that have been constant throughout the ages and across cultures and potentially felt by all human kind. Hence, we unconsciously resonate with the ‘Hero’s Journey’ because we naturally resonate with the archetypal pattern of life that it presents.

Moreover, reader-response theorists (Rosenblatt, 1978; Bleich, 1998) believe that the meaning of reading narrative resides within the reader through a transaction between the text and the reader’s personal life experiences and background knowledge. Thus the archetypal pattern of the ‘Hero’s Journey’ may be a possible tool for making the nature of this transaction more explicit and easier to occur.

There are several other key factors that form the rationale for transferring the ‘Hero’s Journey’ (Campbell, 1998) into the primary classroom. Firstly the ‘Hero’s Journey’ is the pattern of narrative; secondly it is speculated that readers naturally resonate with the archetypal pattern of the ‘Hero’s Journey’; thirdly the ‘Hero’s Journey’ has several potential and favorable benefits for learners in educational settings; fourthly the pattern has been successfully transferred into other fields; fifthly I have had personal experiences that

have effected the rationale of the inquiry; and lastly there exists a paucity of research on the ‘Hero’s Journey’ transferred to the classroom context. I will briefly elaborate on these key points below.

The ‘Hero’s Journey’: The Underlying Pattern of Narrative

Campbell (1991) speculated that humankind are narrative by nature and live according to a narrative pattern that is the story of life’s journey. He believed that our first response to many things in life is through narrative because we have an inner want to share our experiences with fellow humankind and that we naturally communicate by ‘telling a story’. And the narrative to which we live, according to Campbell is our own ‘Hero’s Journey’, that is, the experiences within our lives.

Campbell (1993) speculated that the same analogous pattern, the same archetypal building blocks that represent the sequence of life, underlie all forms of narrative and have been symbolised through a vast representation, encompassing written myth, religion, folk songs and the visual arts. Therefore, Campbell (1988) believed that readers experience a natural accord with the ‘Hero’s Journey’ through all spheres of narrative because they recognise the underlying archetypal pattern of human experience.

Campbell’s Notions of Natural Response

Campbell (1991) speculated that when readers read or hear a narrative portrayal of the ‘Hero’s Journey’ they experience several notions of natural response that relate their own

lives to the narratives that they read. Each notion of natural response will be described below.

A natural response towards narrative.

As stated previously, Campbell (1993) speculated that readers resonate with narrative through written stories, art and religions because people's lives are also narrative, and therefore naturally relate their personal experiences to the narrative that they read or see.

A natural response to the 'Hero's Journey' pattern.

The 'Hero's Journey' is the pattern of narrative made explicit (Campbell, 1988). Therefore, it is speculated that readers experience a natural resonance with the 'Hero's Journey', as the underlying pattern of narrative, and therefore relate this to their own lives and the narratives that they read and experience.

A natural response to archetype.

Although a knowledge of archetype is potentially inherent within all humankind most people are unaware of its significance. However, Campbell (1991) speculated that in recognising the archetypal elements that underlie the 'Hero's Journey' we are made aware of our archetypal pools of knowledge and can apply them to benefit our lives. Armed with a knowledge of archetype, Campbell speculated that readers become attentive to the intertextual transfer of archetype relevant to their world and are better able to understand the symbolism and archetype within their own lives and within narrative.

A natural response between the themes in narrative and readers' own life experiences. Campbell (1988) speculated that the 'Hero's Journey' not only has the potential for readers to better understand narrative in text, but is also a means for reader's to reflect on the pattern in their own lives. He speculated that readers reflect on the 'Hero's Journey' in their own lives when they read it in stories because we are narrative by nature and so the experiences of others apply to our own. A natural interaction between the pattern of narrative in texts and the pattern of narrative in readers' own lives then evolves, whereby readers gain a higher, more integrated understanding of the self and narrative.

A natural response to other people through a social, spiritual understanding. Campbell (1991) speculated that the presence of the 'Hero's Journey' in all forms of narrative, entices readers to recognise that they share common experiences with others. He believed that this consciousness of a common way of thinking could lead to a unified and social, somewhat spiritual, understanding on the commonality of human experience (1988).

Benefits of Transferring the 'Hero's Journey' to Educational Contexts

Harris and Thompson (1997) delineate that students who they have taught through high school and college education programs experienced several positive processes and outcomes from exposure to the 'Hero's Journey'. Consequently, it is envisaged that the following benefits will also transfer to the contexts of a primary classroom when the 'Hero's Journey' is implemented.

Enhanced comprehension and understanding of texts, movies and other media.

Increased experiences of intertextuality.

A connection between themes in texts with personal life experiences.

Experiences of self-reflection.

An understanding of, and the ability to better interpret symbolism, stereotype and archetype in texts that empowers students to use, rather than be manipulated by these.

Methodology

Choice of the Qualitative Paradigm

Patton (1990, p. 39) indicates that ‘a paradigm of choices rejects methodological orthodoxy in favour of *methodological appropriateness* as the primary criterion for judging methodological quality’. Hence, considering the subjectivity of the context, purpose, and the research question, this inquiry demanded the use of the naturalistic paradigm. It was implied that data collection would foster insight into the relationship between students’ response to literature using the ‘Hero’s Journey’ and Campbell’s (1991) notions of natural response, and an illuminative and evaluative case study method seemed the most appropriate approach to elucidate these relationships (Yin, 1994; Merriam, 1991; Creswell, 2002; Guba and Lincoln, 1981).

Using the naturalistic setting, human instrument, qualitative methods and tacit knowledge within a hermeneutic dialect (Guba and Lincoln, 1989) framework was used as the model for data collection and analysis.

Site and Participants

This inquiry was carried in the classroom of one stage three class and their teacher, at a local Catholic school in an ‘older suburb’ within the Wollongong district. The class is a co-educational year six, comprising of twenty-eight students. The teacher ‘Karli’, advised that there existed a diverse range of language abilities within the class and that students come from a plethora of multicultural backgrounds, comprising of mainly Anglo-Saxon, Portuguese and Lebanese, with some students having very little modeling of English at home. Furthermore, seven children came from the reading-recovery program, three of which, Karli believes are at a stage two reading level as outlined by the N.S.W K-6 English Syllabus (1998).

Findings

Data analysis involved ‘sieving’ the data through Campbell’s concepts of natural response to illuminate the elements that surfaced in the contexts of a primary classroom.

The study found that there was a great deal of resonance with Campbell’s (1991) notions of natural response when the ‘Hero’s Journey’ was introduced into the classroom context through the shared book experience. The process of resonance appeared lively and interactive and involved the interplay between Campbell’s notions of natural response and the relationships and nature of learning in the classroom. Students applied an archetypal resonance to the text; undertook a personal resonance with the ‘Hero’s Journey’ to other narrative and their own lives; and also developed a social resonance to other students and

the teacher. The flowchart on the following page is a synthesis of these notions of natural response as they occurred during this inquiry. Although some aspects of the program may have been influenced by the initiation of the reader response approach and the shared group response, it seems that using the ‘Hero’s Journey’ in the classroom encouraged students to move beyond the literal levels of meaning in narrative to initiate responses that were more personal and relevant to their own personal journey and understanding.

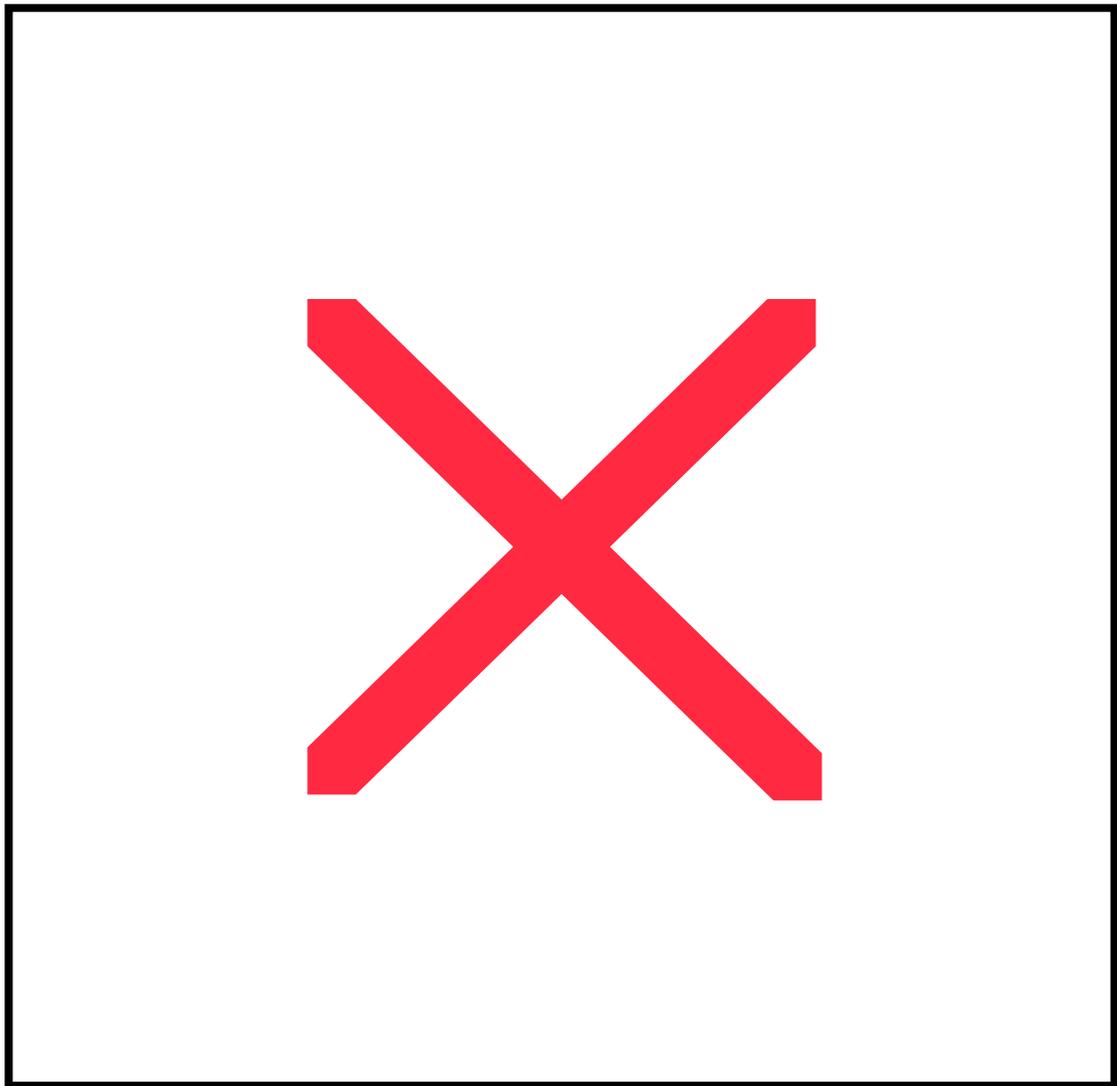


Figure 5.1: The interactions that occurred when the ‘Hero’s Journey’ was placed into the classroom context

Consequently, as Campbell's (1991) notions of natural response surfaced, other responses to the 'Hero's Journey' also emerged which seemed specific to learning in the classroom context (see figure 5.2 below). As Campbell's studies were not specific to the classroom, having placed his theory into a new context has apparently rendered several other responses related to, but distinct to his notions of natural response. It seems that there was a shift from teacher-directed to student-directed learning and that students also showed behaviours that were more confident and risk-taking. Studying the 'Hero's journey' also appeared to have increased students' focus on, and enjoyment of narrative.

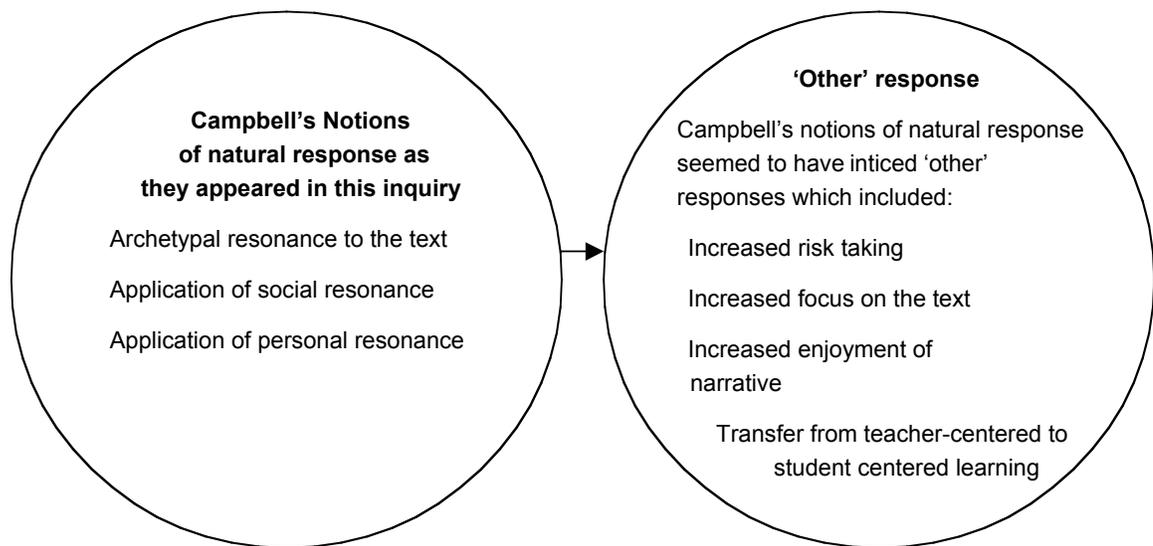


Figure 5.2: Relationship between the natural response that Campbell described and new insights of natural response that surfaced from this inquiry.

However time and length restriction do not allow for a full disclosure of the overall findings and therefore the following represents the findings in regard to the primary focus of this project, understanding the nature of the Personal Resonance within the framework of an archetypical encounter.

Application of Personal Resonance: Recognising and Applying the Notion of Personal Response

Campbell (1993) believed that all cultures have heroes throughout their histories not by coincidence but because they express a deep psychological aspect of human existence. Therefore, just as the archetypal pattern of the ‘Hero’s Journey’ incites a natural reaction from the reader towards narrative in text, Campbell speculated that ‘the Hero’s Journey’ also shows the reader a relationship between the ‘Hero’s Journey’ pattern and their own life experiences.

Campbell (1988) deduced that readers apply a personal resonance to the ‘Hero’s Journey’ in two ways. He believed that readers resonate with the self-reflection of characters in narrative and also apply the ‘Hero’s Journey’ pattern of experiences within texts to their own lives.

Once the myth catches you there is a want for deeper meaning, an understanding of the significance of life, we find who we are and we undergo the experience of being alive and feel rapture (Campbell, 1988).

Consequently, throughout this inquiry students appeared to respond to both these aspects of personal resonance by constantly moving to and from narrative and their personal experiences. The majority of students seemed to easily and naturally compare the text with other narratives and with experiences in their own lives through recognising the archetypal pattern of the 'Hero's Journey'.

A circular pattern emerged in which personal experience and the text were continually in interplay, which lead students to empathetically understand the text in light of their own experiences, thoughts and feelings, and lead closer to understanding the characters and the plot in *Rowan of Rin*, rather than moving further from it.

Karli It is also a theme that exists in society and among all of us in our lives, it's not one that is confined to the classroom, but an issue that can be dealt with...and really effects everyone. At a point in their lives, everyone is a hero and everyone is a failure. You know you can't always be a hero, but it's a topic that is relevant to everyone.

Moreover, according to language theorists Rosenblatt (1978); Bleich (1998); and Goodman (1996), literary interpretation depends on readers' own lives and prior knowledge. Therefore, meaning is formed through readers relating to the human experience that underlies a text, in light of their own experiences and knowledge.

If literature is to matter, however, if it is to become significant in the reader's life, then those personal connections become hard to deny. Meaning lies in that shared ground where the reader and text meet (Probst, 1994, p. 38).

Consequently, in developing their understanding of *Rowan of Rin*, students introduced and related their personal experiences to that of the characters in the text, and also introduced intertextual relationships with other narrative. In doing this, students showed aspects of the self-reflection that Campbell (1988) described and also an understanding of their own personal narrative. On the following page is a flow-chart of the interactions that occurred as students applied a personal resonance to the 'Hero's Journey'.

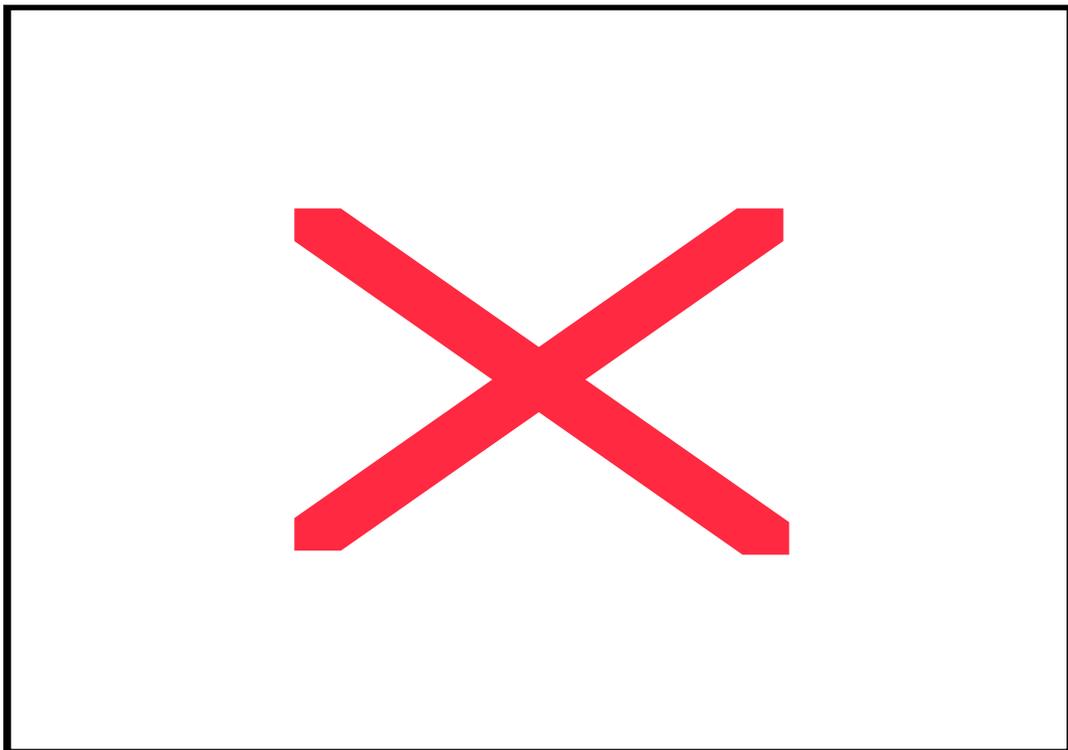


Figure 5.4: Personal Resonance to the ‘Hero’s Journey’

Self-reflection

Campbell (1988) believed that heroes are used in narrative as a metaphor for humanity’s search for self-identity, and function to bring the reader back to a consciousness of their own experiences. He speculated that the self-reflection experienced by characters in narrative has the potential to entice a reflection by readers on their own lives.

They (myths) carry keys that open the whole realm of the desired and feared adventure of the discovery of the self (Campbell, 1993, p. 8).

Likewise, Bleich (1978, p. 7) speculates that narrative is ‘a reflection of people, and in it we can see human problems and concerns that we are going through ourselves’. Whereas, Vogler (1999, p. 11) posits that the ‘Hero’s Journey’ asks of the reader several aspects of themselves, including ‘who am I? Where did I come from? Where will I go when I die? What is good and what is evil? What must I do about it?’

Harris, Mattson and Ourada (1999, p. 131) also recognise that ‘literary archetypes are an effective way to get young readers thinking about how story characters and situations relate to everyday lives’.

Consequently, activities and discussions that linked aspects of *Rowan of Rin* to students' own lives acted as a catalyst to enhance an emotional response back to the text and self reflection.

Heidi I can actually achieve my own goals like Rowan.

Throughout this inquiry students frequently introduced personal experience into discussions without any enticement from Karli or I, which showed a natural resonance to characters and events in the text and a relationship of this to their own lives.

Alex He's like my cousin in England who is a big winge bag.

Zona Everybody thinks that you're not worth it. Because I'm the youngest in the family...if I have opinions they won't listen.

Sara If you believe in yourself you can do whatever you want to do just like how Rowan climbed the mountain and became a hero.

Moreover, when class members were asked during the final interview what they learnt from the text other than the actual pattern, students described aspects of personal growth and identity.

Chan Always show yourself, like don't ever be someone you're not...always be yourself, don't change for anybody just to fit in.

Zona Just be yourself. Don't be like Marley, who always kept her distance.

Alex The Dragon thing...the things inside you that stop you from
doing something.

Gianni Not to be scared, but be brave.

Heidi The book is about facing your fears and to show and prove you
can achieve what you set out to achieve.

The Personal Narrative

Another aspect of natural response that Campbell (1991) described, which occurred in this inquiry involved students finding relationships between the pattern of the ‘Hero’s Journey’ and students’ own personal narrative. The way in which students related these two aspects seemed to show that we do live our lives in narrative like Barbara Hardy (1994) describes.

We dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate, and love by narrative. In order to really to live, we make up stories about ourselves and others, about the personal as well as the social, past and future (Hardy, 1994, p. 13).

Students seemed to naturally reflect on aspects of *Rowan or Rin* and their own lives and Larsen (1996) refers to these sparks of response as ‘mythogems’, which are indicators that show a resonance with the ‘Hero’s Journey’. For example, during discussion on Rowan’s ‘calling’, students would naturally relate a calling of their own or someone who they knew.

The kids delved into these ideas of intertextuality and just ran with it – bringing ‘gurus and alliances’ and transformation into the discussions - without provocation from me (Researcher’s journal 16/5/03).

Similarly, Harris and Thompson (1997) found that it was not uncommon for students, ‘when telling us about the challenges they face, to use phrases such as, “I guess this is my call” or “I haven’t reached the abyss yet, but I know it will make me stronger” (Harris and Thompson, 1997, p. iii).

Three tasks that specifically focused on students’ transfer of the ‘Hero’s Journey’ to their own lives included students’ personal mountain challenges, swamp artworks and dragon posters. (See appendix 4h and 4m for student work samples). In all three activities students were asked to apply their understanding of Rowan’s journey to their own journey in life and in all three activities there was not one student who did not complete an activity, or who was unsuccessful in portraying an understanding of the ‘Hero’s Journey’ concept concerned. The majority of students not only completed the activities, but were eager to share with the rest of the class their ideas and personal experiences.

Karli Well the fact that in the swamp activity they had to draw in the middle something that they’d stop their quest for, just shows that they used personal examples. And their dragons are a personal creation or representation of what they think being the hero is. So yes, the hero theme really was brought out, but it made them connect on a personal level because everyone can relate to the

topic of being a hero...because everybody has been a hero in some way. So definitely, I really do think that it was brought out, and touched the majority of students in some way.

During day five, prior to Karli asking students to discuss their personal challenges as related to the text, a student introduced a personal experience of going to the dentist.

Hannah cut in because she had a spontaneous response to 'challenge' in life (Researcher's journal 12/5/03).

Hannah resonated with the notion of challenge in the text and felt impelled to then share her common experience, which consequently motivated Karli to also share her experience. Karli's response then motivated other students to share their own challenges.

Karli When I did the HSC I put a lot of weight on. But during my first year of Uni I decided to get it all off so I joined a gym, walked and dieted and I lost the weight and maintained it off. That was my personal challenge.

Chan My biggest challenge was to understand why I have to say good-bye and worry about my dad more than ten times a year. Every month when I was little I'd cry because I knew that he had to go away but now I accept that he has to go.

Glen Eight years ago I couldn't ride a bike but now i can.

Glen's response was not only important for this lesson, but was relevant during an art lesson when he did not feel confident enough to draw. He was able to reflect on the challenge of not being able to ride a bike and understand this in light of overcoming the challenge of drawing. A cycle had evolved where Glen recognised challenge in the text, reflected on this through a previous experience and then applied the knowledge gained from this combination of learning experiences to a real life situation.

Discussion on personal challenges then naturally developed into an introduction on the 'gurus and alliances' in students' own lives, as students introduced the notion of people helping them in order to meet their challenges. Heidi discussed that she was good at netball due to her mother's help and Zona explained she improved in maths because she received help from her sister in the holidays.

On a following day, after having discussed the archetypal imagery of the swamp used in *Rowan of Rin*, students were asked to create their own swamps to represent what might tempt them from their personal 'Hero's Journey'. Students applied their archetypal knowledge of 'trials and tests' as they described an aspect in their own lives that could manipulate them from their own path, and also recognised the importance of their 'gurus and alliances' as people who care for them along their journeys. Two extra art lessons were used for students to create their swamps, and students seemed to show pride in them at their completion when they presented them to the rest of the class on day twelve.

Robyn If you decide to go on a quest you have to have strong friends and smart friends...I drew my family in the swamp because no matter what you do, right or wrong, they will always be there for you every single second of every single minute of every single hour of the day. It doesn't matter what choices you make they will be there, the people that have been there all the time.

Sara This swamp means to me that you have to be careful no matter what.

Kelly At the centre of my swamp I chose to draw a circle. To me a circle represents life, of what is most precious to us. A circle is the shape represented of all living things.

Kelly's representation of the circle in her swamp showed an understanding of the circle's archetypal significance as totality of the relationship between nature and man. She applied a very high understanding of archetype and she enjoyed discussing her different interpretations of these ideas. It was as if archetype allowed her to interact with the text on a level in which she had not had been able to before.

Karli Kelly is a very interesting student, she is a very high achiever. The fact that she interprets, that she can always see things on a different tangent to most students, she thinks differently, she thinks laterally, in a different sought of thinking - her ideas and opinions were always really interesting. Even with her swamp, the fact that she drew the circle, that was really deep. It had so much meaning to it that you thought wow, I wouldn't have thought about something like that. And that was wonderful.

On day fourteen, after having discussed the archetypal notion of ‘dragons’ in texts and having specifically discussed the symbolism of the dragon in *Rowan of Rin*, students successfully created dragon artworks that were archetypal of their personal challenges. This application of dragons in their own lives showed that students could transfer their knowledge of archetype from the text to their personal narrative.

Jack These here are my dragons. I’m messy, I don’t do my homework because I play soccer all day. I get mad about my coach because I know more than he does, he tries to teach me skills I already know.

Hannah I’m going to draw a dragon and I’m going to write about what might stop me from doing things in the future.

David Things that slow me down, like when someone says ‘we are going to the movies’, I always think that we are and then when we don’t I get really let down.

Janelle Protective, short tempered, worrying about other people’s opinions and unorganised.

Application of Personal Resonance: Intertextual Application

Relating the ‘Hero’s Journey’ to personal experiences also involved a natural tendency for students to relate the ‘Hero’s Journey’ to the movies and books in their own lives. From day two students related the journey, archetypes and characters in *Rowan of Rin* to other narrative and this introduced other dimensions of thinking to the text. It appeared that this occurred naturally, as students understood how the story of Rowan was also the story of

many other characters from both modern and older contexts. Students discussed aspects of *Rowan of Rin* on a level that I do not believe they would have reached had they not been studying the ‘Hero’s Journey’ pattern.

Much of the time there was no need for the teacher to ask for examples of intertextuality because the commonality between the pattern of *Rowan of Rin* and of other narrative enticed students to share their discoveries and this level of response that students gave was evident that they had experienced a natural resonance to the ‘Hero’s Journey’.

David We used *the Matrix* as our plan...he (Rowan) might not want to go like how Neo didn’t want when he first got told to go on his quest.

Alex It’s like the *Sword in the rock*, and Rowan will have a go.

Chan This is exactly like in *Vertical Limit* where about six climb a mountain and only three come down.

Moreover, during day nine when students were asked to discuss the ‘gurus and alliances’ in their lives (without being instructed to relate anything to other narrative), students began to analyse the similarities between the nature of relationships in their lives and in other forms of narrative. Two students discussed who the ‘Sebastian’ (the crab in *Disney’s the Little Mermaid*) was in their own lives by analysing the relationship between Ariel and Sebastian. They then discussed who they had similar relationship dynamics with.

On other occasions Karli and I explicitly asked students to apply intertextual understanding of the 'Hero's Journey' to discussions and activities. I have placed in brackets the name of the text or movie that students refer to.

Adam (*Lord of the Rings*) Well Rowan is like Frodo. You'd never ever think that he'd want to go on this quest because he's weak and little but he does.

Ramy (*Scream - Movie*) A girl named Sydney Prescott in a movie called *Scream* is a hero because she is brave and never gives up.

Hannah (*Titanic - Movie*) Its like there's Rose and the other boy and they're not allowed to be friends and stuff and that's sought of like with Rowan and Strong John, but in the end they sought of connect and that's sought of like with Strong John as well. In the end I think the boy ends up being the hero because he dies for the girl and that's sought of like Rowan as well accept Strong John doesn't die.

Alex Its called *Pete's Dragon* and at the end of it the dragon leaves the boy and he has to do it by himself, and that's sought of like in *Rowan of Rin*. At the end when he becomes the hero to himself and not to anybody else.

Rebecca The *Lord of the Rings* relates to *Rowan of Rin* because the boy in the *Lord of the Rings* is like Rowan. He was a chicken but then he becomes a hero.

It became evident that students could proficiently relate aspects of *Rowan of Rin* to other narrative. Not only this, but unexpectedly students began relating comic strips and video games to the ‘Hero’s Journey’ pattern.

Alex (*Mario Brothers – Nintendo Game*) Its like in Mario. The first levels are the swamps and then there was a dragon in the last level. Yeah, so the dragon was that last thing that he has to overcome

Moreover, during the last lesson, after having identified the ‘Hero’s Journey’ within *Rowan of Rin*, students were asked if the pattern transferred to other books or movies. From this brief yet highly responsive segment of the lesson, students portrayed a deep understanding of the ‘Hero’s Journey’ by applying their understanding of the pattern to other narrative.

Students articulated what the ‘calling’ was in other forms of narrative, and their application of this showed that students had a solid understanding of this stage in the pattern.

Jack (*Harry Potter*) He doesn’t do it because he has to. He does it only because of his parents, because Voldemort killed his parents.

Robyn (*Legally Blonde – Movie*) She decided to become a lawyer because her boyfriend that she thought was going to marry her

actually dumps her for a brunette....she goes to be a lawyer to go
and get him back.

Students also identified the ‘heroic quest’ and ‘trials and tests’ in other narratives.

Leanne It’s really identical to *Rowan of Rin* except *Rowan of Rin* has
different little details. In *Harry Potter* its just like little
incidence happen and then one big one. In *the Philosopher’s
Stone* they know that someone is going to steal it, so they have
to go on this quest and fight.

Hannah When he (*Harry Potter*) has to face his fears, his trials and tests
are when he has to fight Voldemort and he has to fight the troll.

Glen (*Harry Potter*) And plus he had to kill the dragon.

Janelle (*the Fast and the Furious - Movie*) For the trials and tests, well
this guy he set them up to see if they were good enough, and
they had to break into this car and get something in the glove
box.

Additionally, students showed an understanding of ‘transformation’ as they discussed the
intertextual application of this for various characters.

David (*the Matrix - Movie*) In the end he finds out that he has all of
this power and stuff. And back in the beginning he was always
running away from the agents but in the end...he faces the
agents.

Lisa (*Legally Blonde - Movie*) In the end she ends up getting her chance to get him back because he wants her back, but she just says no because she is better than him and she becomes a good lawyer.

Robyn (*Titanic - Movie*) Rose must change to survive. When she met Jack that's where all the changing began...Jack teaches her that there's a fun life out there.

Throughout the inquiry, students also made connections between religious contexts and the 'Hero's Journey' and the text. Being a Catholic school, I found that students were exposed to much discussion on archetype, however this was done implicitly without students nor the teacher aware. On the first day of the inquiry I walked into the classroom at the end of religious education to hear students describing examples of 'righteous' behaviours, and unknowingly what were also characteristics relevant to the archetypal elements of the hero. Moreover, during religious education students also discussed the symbolic meanings of a 'black heart', their patron saint and the crucifix.

On another day during a class discussion on what the Bukshah thought of Rowan, students compared the character of Rowan to a 'shepherd', 'carer', and 'savior', showing archetypal understanding of the hero as 'mentor' and introducing religious connotations. Karli asked why Rowan was seen as a 'savior' and students commented, like God, Rowan gave food to the Bukshah when they were hungry and cared for them when they were sick.

Hence, the ‘Hero’s Journey’ related to the personal lives of students through their own ‘Hero’s Journey’ experiences, similar issues of identity to characters and also the narrative in their immediate lives and religious education experiences answers were coming from them and when writing about personal experiences, only a few students needed instigation from Karli or I to begin.

Moreover, during the planning stages of the inquiry, Karli had believed that her students would not feel confident enough to create personal ‘dragon’ artworks. However, on the last lesson she had no hesitation in giving the activity to the students, and their artworks showed great creativity and knowledge about archetypal ‘dragons’.

Karli I was impressed by their level of involvement in the project. I thought that my children would of failed personally. I have faith in my class, but I doubted their ability would of successfully fulfilled the requirements of the project.

Artistic response, integrated effectively with the ‘Hero’s Journey’ and it seemed that this enabled students to communicate their ideas that they may not have been able to with words. Consequently, Eisenkraft (1999, p. 96) states that ‘visuals, as response, represent a third “sign” system through which understandings are expressed metaphorically’.

Furthermore, on day twelve students gave oral presentations of their swamp drawings to the class, Karli and Mr Glinty the principal. Students were not told who was to present

because everyone who presented on that day volunteered, and more students were wanting to present after the bell sounded. Students appeared proud in showing their swamps to the rest of the class.

Increased Risk-taking: Response to Peer Feedback

Moreover, students showed risk-taking behaviour in how they gave, received and responded to constructive criticisms from other class members. Often during discussions among the class and in table groups, students challenged each others' views in a non-threatening and respectful manner, whereby students did not appear embarrassed or self-conscious after receiving feedback. It was evident that students felt the environment, perhaps created by the 'Hero's Journey', safe enough to do this.

Kelly I picked up that everyone has all different ideas and they think different things about what happened.

The following conversation portrays how Jack was influenced by David's comments and shows the nature of student response that often occurred.

Jack I think that Strong John is a traitor because you know how Rowan saved him from the dragon, yeah well when they go back he's probably going to say that he saved Rowan, and so the villages are probably going to still hate Rowan and like Strong John.

David Jack, when they came down he said that Rowan was the real hero. They aren't going to hate him.

Additionally, Karli became a risk taker throughout the inquiry. She allowed students to take direction over their learning, shared her personal responses with students and was also wanting to use the 'Hero's Journey' with another text following this inquiry.

Karli I will do the activities using the lesson plans that you gave me to modify and use them again.

Increased Focus on Narrative

Focus on the 'Hero's Journey' developed throughout the inquiry, with most students appearing very eager and alert during readings and persistently interrupting Karli to consolidate their understanding of the text and discuss the plot and characters.

Karli They were focused on it more than I thought. They wanted it read to them during other parts of the day.

Students were focused on the text because they had reason to be. Students appeared interested in *Rowan of Rin* because they were not given meaningless activities to unfold the text, and instead given activities relevant to their own lives that reflected their personal journey in relation to characters' experiences and vice versa.

When the class discussed a certain topic such as the change in the character of Rowan, the majority of students would remain focused on the topic into the end of the discussion. I only noticed three students on different occasions sitting at their desks not discussing the text or something related to it.

Hannah is drawing flowers and the only one not listening (Researcher's journal 9/5/03).

Moreover, using the 'Hero's Journey' gave students multiple opportunities to portray their understanding of narrative through different mediums and class discussion, and this seemed to assist the focus of some students who otherwise did not generally perform well in English. Hence, implementing the 'Hero's Journey' into the classroom was flexible in its focus and cross-curricular application and encompassed the integration of Multiple Intelligence theory (Gardner, 1995).

Hannah was described by Karli as an 'underachiever' and was referred to Karli by her previous teacher as having a stage two reading level according to the NSW English K – 6 Syllabus (1998). Although Karli recognised that Hannah generally did not do well in English, she explained that she enjoyed 'anything creative'. Consequently, Karli found that Hannah performed very well when she studied the text using the 'Hero's Journey' because studying the pattern encompassed a 'different' approach to literature that catered for Hannah's learning style and interests.

Karli She's really gone with this.

Furthermore, Karli found that Jack, another 'underachiever', was well focused during English when the 'Hero's Journey' was used. Throughout the inquiry Jack frequently asked me to his table before and during class to share his ideas and he definitely did not appear to be an 'underachiever'.

Karli Jack can be a below average student and the answers that he was giving really surprised me. The fact that he has found something that he liked and he was absorbed in was really really good. Obviously he had a great understanding.

Increased Enjoyment of Narrative

In the initial stages of this inquiry, the majority of students did not enjoy *Rowan of Rin* and appeared bored and disinterested in a story that they described as 'old-fashioned' and complicated. However, students seemed to enjoy the text as they became familiar with the 'Hero's Journey' pattern and related it to their own worlds.

Nicola I was wrong at first about the book because I thought that it was kind of boring and I wasn't right. The book got really interesting and I really enjoyed the book because it was like a challenge. I liked that they got down off the mountain and got the water back but I didn't like that it finished.

Gianni I had fun

Students portrayed an enjoyment of the personal nature of the ‘Hero’s Journey’ through discussions and activities. Students seemed to enjoy the lessons because they could relate to the activities that meant something personal to them and this seemed to encourage students to make sense of their lives and their worlds and not look for answers outside of themselves. This also provoked a more meaningful understanding of the text as students could relate to it in light of their common experiences.

Karli The reason that I could see they enjoyed it was that they put a lot of time and effort into their swamps, that was a reflection. Also the fact that they would come up to me and talk to me about the book when you weren’t here. And also by the fact that they got their book clubs and they were telling me that *Rowan of Rin* has another three or four books in the series, that was another sign that they obviously were enjoying what we were doing. So yes, I could see that they were very enthusiastic when you came in too.

Moreover, students asked Karli to continue reading once the daily chapter was read, showing that they obviously enjoyed the text. In these instances Karli called for a class vote, to which at least three quarters of students showed that they wanted to continue reading. Whereas the other third of students also showed their enjoyment of the text, requesting to discuss the chapters before they continued to read.

Karli The fact that they discussed it in class during English and other activities showed they had a passion for it.

Students also showed an enjoyment for understanding narrative using the ‘Hero’s Journey’ in how they frequently discussed the text when walking out to recess or lunch, and occasionally asked if they could stay in after the bell to finish their work. On one occasion when the bell went for lunch time, more than five students asked Karli if they could finish their work into recess. Previously I had never heard students wanting to continue their English work during their playtime and I thought that perhaps they wanted to do this because they did not perceive the activities they were doing as school ‘work’.

Students often called me over prior to class beginning to share their latest ideas and predictions relevant to the text, and Karli explained that students approached her during lunch and after school to discuss the text also.

Not only did students show that they enjoyed the ‘Hero’s Journey’, but Karli also showed an enthusiasm and enjoyment for the project from a teacher’s point of view. Karli enjoyed herself because her students had enjoyed learning, and showed a great understanding and application of narrative. Furthermore, the ‘Hero’s Journey’ gave Karli the opportunity to be creative in her teaching. She was not teaching from a text book but instead dealing with something new everyday.

Karli Its great that the kids enjoy being read to...Definitely next term we’ll have a reader and get through the series. Because it gives

them a different feel of reading, and that's good. I really enjoyed it.

Conclusion: A 'Transformation and a Return'

Apart from Campbell's (1991) notions of natural response, he also speculated that the experience of narrative evokes a transformation and return of consciousness. He believed that when readers experience the 'Hero's Journey' readers become empowered to better live their own life's journey and improve social well being. Consequently, in this inquiry, it seemed that students did experience narrative in a way that did entice this empowerment, however, students also embarked on a personal journey of discovery that effected their understanding of, and attitudes towards reading narrative.

All the myths have to do deal with is transformation of consciousness, that you are thinking in this way and you have now to think in this way (Campbell, 1988).

The 'Hero's Journey' appeared to be a very effective and creative tool for understanding narrative on a personal and relevant level, and related well to learning in the social situation of a classroom. A spontaneous interaction seemed to occur as students discussed the class text using the shared group response and reflected on the text in terms of their own lives and in other narratives. It appeared that students came to a conscious understanding that characters in narrative and also themselves experience a common

pattern and this allowed students to become closer to understanding narrative in a genuine and emotional way.

From comparing their personal narratives and experiences to the ‘Hero’s Journey’ of others and in texts, students also recognised their common patterns of experience and this seemed to effect the social learning culture of the class. Students showed a cohesion of like thoughts and emotions as they discusses their common experiences and the nature of interactions and relationships between students and between the teacher and students reflected this. Students also portrayed risk-taking behaviours and appeared to take more control over their learning.

Although these responses to the ‘Hero’s Journey’ may be related to reader response initiatives that were integrated into the program, it appears that they were integrally linked to the ‘Hero’s Journey’. Students recognised the ‘Hero’s Journey’ as the template of human experience when they related experiences from the text to their own, and realised that other narrative also resonated with the text. Perhaps this occurred because like all of us, these students live their lives according to narrative which the ‘Hero’s Journey’ accommodates for. It appears that relating their own narratives to others, motivated an emotional response and a higher level of thought, which seemed to prompt a social understanding unlike what I have seen other reader response initiatives render.

Moreover, the ‘Hero’s Journey’ appeared to cater for all abilities within the classroom. The study showed that students who generally performed well in English appeared to interpret and understood the text on a higher level using archetype and symbolism.

Whereas lower achieving students seemed to use the ‘Hero’s Journey’ to ‘hook into’ the story to gain a basic understanding of the sequence of events, and change and growth of characters. It became apparent that the ‘Hero’s Journey’ allowed students to achieve at their own pace.

Additionally, Karli described that her class showed a resonance with the ‘Hero’s Journey’ pattern that was beyond what she thought the class were capable of, and believed the success of the program showed that younger students may also benefit from it.

Karli I was impressed by their level of involvement in the project. I thought that my children would of failed personally. I have faith in my class, but I doubted their ability would of successfully fulfilled the requirements of the project. But I must say, I was impressed by their efforts, all of the children!

Overall, students showed an intimate response to *Rowan of Rin*, other narrative and the relationship of the ‘Hero’s Journey’ to their own lives within this inquiry, which probably would not have occurred had students been exposed to the typical ‘recipe’ for understanding narrative that encompasses something along the lines of ‘orientation’, ‘complication’ and ‘resolution’. The ‘Hero’s Journey’ gives hope to educators and learners in offering an innovative, creative and personal approach to understanding narrative and may be what is needed to relight a passion for reading among students that is seemingly dwindling (Cairney, 1990).

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