

Common Elements in a Hero Myth

1. Miraculous or unusual birth.
2. Mortal mother, immortal father.
3. Prophecy concerning the child's destiny or some future crisis.
4. Child raised away from his birthright (or he withdraw before a quest).
5. Realization of true identity.
6. Quest, life mission undertaken. The quest may include accomplishing difficult tasks, ridding world of dangers, or going on a journey—perhaps to the underworld or afterlife.
7. On the quest, help (people, objects) comes from unusual sources.
8. Enters “belly of the whale” at the nadir of the quest.
9. Resurrection/ rebirth occurs with the hero—or with the community.

OR

9. Hero makes an error in judgment which leads to his downfall.
10. Hero experiences a violent or unusual death.
11. End of his life is inglorious or ordinary.

Criticisms

- Similarities can be overstated.
- Differences can be deemphasized or ignored.
- Aren't women heroic?