

Travels with Charley Lessons

Lesson 1 – Steinbeck and Archetypal Quests

Karl Jung believed that certain images and stories exist deep in the human subconscious; they're part of the human experience.

“Being unconscious, the existence of archetypes can only be deduced indirectly by examining behavior, images, art, myths, etc. They are inherited potentials which are actualized when they enter consciousness as images or manifest in behavior on interaction with the outside world” (Wikipedia, “Jungian Archetypes”).

Other writers have detailed their response to Jung's (and Plato's before him) concept of archetypes. One of these archetypes is the Savior Figure. Luke Skywalker, Harry Potter, Superman, Frodo, and Mulan are popular examples of the Savior Figure. Savior Figures are reluctant “regular” people who are chosen to complete a quest in order to rescue humanity from destruction. The Savior Figure must go through stages in his travels from obscurity to heroism. Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* lists five parts to the Journey of the Hero:

Part 1: “Call to Adventure” - the hero's impulse to embark upon the journey. Often at this initial point, the hero will encounter a “helper,” who sometimes offers a magical charm (or “amulet”) to aid in the quest.

Part 2: “Crossing the Threshold” - Now the hero must pass from the safety of the ordinary world into a hazardous realm of the unknown, such as a desert, a jungle, or an alien land. A “shadow presence” guards the entrance to this dark realm. The hero can only cross the threshold by defeating the shadow presence or by confronting death in some way. This confrontation may be real or symbolic, but it always ends in either the hero's transformation or resurrection.

Part 3: “The Test” - After crossing the threshold the hero undergoes a series of difficult experiences climaxing in a “Supreme Test. The hero who passes this final test progresses to the fourth stage of the journey.

Part 4: “The Reward” - A hero is rewarded with marriage, recognition by deity, transformation into a deity, or the attainment of a miraculous elixir.

Part 5: “The Return” - The hero leaves the dark realm with the reward that brings restoration to his own domain.

“Once having traversed the threshold, the hero moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials. . . The hero is covertly aided by the advice, amulets, and secret agents of the supernatural helper whom

he met before his entrance into this region. Or it may be that he here discovers for the first time that there is a benign power everywhere supporting him in his superhuman passage.” -- Joseph Campbell

Assignment: Many critics attribute the qualities of the Hero’s Journey to Steinbeck’s *Travels with Charley*.” As you read the book, take notes that reflect your understanding of how John Steinbeck satisfies the requirements outlined in Campbell’s Hero’s Quest. Be thorough in your examples and support from the text, as you will be meeting in groups to prepare a report explaining your findings for one of the steps. Because you don’t know for which step you will be responsible, your notes and response must cover all five of the elements.

Lesson 2 – Steinbeck and The American Identity

Assignment:

- View and/or Read John Steinbeck’s December 10, 1962 **Nobel Prize acceptance speech** at http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1962/steinbeck-speech.html (If you have trouble with this link, go to nobelprize.org and search for John Steinbeck’s Nobel Prize acceptance speech.)
- Write a **multi-paragraph essay** demonstrating one of the **major themes** in *Travels with Charley*. The homogenization of America or racism might be two possibilities. Remember to “explode open” with an arresting **hook**. State your topic in a well-developed **thesis statement** and provide enough details from the book, including page numbers, to support your thesis. If you use material from other sources, be sure to cite those sources in a Works Cited page. Use Landmark Citation Machine (which you can access through my school web site under “Resources”) for correct MLA parenthetical and Works Cited citation formats. Provide enough **detail** to support your thesis. **Conclusions** are sometimes difficult to write well, so spend some time insuring that your conclusion “snaps shut” in a way that brings your essay to a conclusive, satisfying end.
- Submit your essay in an email attachment to my school address. Go to <http://indianhillsmiddle.canyonsdistrict.org/> - Departments, Language Arts, click on my name, which will take you to my web page. Click on email. I must receive your essay before **August 15**. In order to meet this deadline, start reading the book early, take notes based on the assignment requirements, and schedule carefully.

Note: I hope that you will consider these activities part of an enjoyable summer. Please feel free to contact me via the above email address with any questions or concerns. I will be working most of my summer to ensure that your ninth grade year is challenging, rewarding, and even enjoyable. Have a safe, fun summer, and I’ll see you in August!