

Sep 20 Myth: A Once and Future Map to the Inner Landscape

John Algeo

Myth—something that never happened but is always true

Indian Culture and Greek culture ultimately form the same source

Major Quest stories from each culture are about, on the surface at least, war

Odyssey, Iliad (war)

Ramayana, Bahabvakala *(sp?) (war)

In each of these major quest stories, the main character is looking for his wife

In Ramayana—Rama's wife is stolen from him

War—a metaphor for inner spiritual battle along the spiritual quest

Marriage is another great metaphorical theme of myth: we are all on a quest to be reunited with our higher self (feminine is higher self)

On a quest, we try to unify two polarities into one

--Grail Legend

--Arthurian Cycle

--grail cup represents divine

--cup is a feminine symbol

Merger of polarities

Tolkien—Lord of the Rings—(here the plot part of the quest is to get rid of something)

Frodo means “wise”

Ring means absolute power—when you put it on you have absolute corruption

Golem saves Frodo

Love, kindness—saves us from our mistakes

Wizard of Oz

Polarities: Oz and Kansas

Kansas=Nirvana=home Oz=leaving home—Journey-quest
Click heels three times—magical return to home

Siddhartha—Herman Hesse

Quest for self-discovery

Journey to the East—Hesse

--narrator is nameless: narrator's friend is named Leo / Leo is narrator's higher self

Life is an opportunity to experience through personality

Personality has value proportional to the amount with which it can experience Higher Self

Don Quixote—discovering real self

Moby Dick—coming to terms with natural life

Divine Comedy

Dante on quest for Beatrice polarities

Chaucer

Canterbury Tales

Pilgrimage to Canterbury

Shakespeare—Hamlet

--Quest to find his father's killer / and self-discovery

Milton: Paradise Lost

“To Justify the ways of God to man”

Quest—to discover justice in the world

Hansel and Gretel

Quest to find their way home

Ursula Leaguin

Wizard of Earthsee

Ged's quest to discover who he is

Chases his shadow—two halves become whole

Harry Potter

Harry in search of self-discovery as well

Discussion Questions:

1) Why do you think we so enjoy learning from stories?

How would you describe the difference between learning from a story and learning from an essay?

2) In what ways can you benefit from looking at your life as a heroic quest?

3) Do you think the Theosophical Organization is on a group quest? How would YOU describe that group quest?

4) As you journey on your personal quest, how do you decide that you are traveling on the correct or incorrect path?

5) Do you have a favorite quest story? Do you think it has subtly affected your life decisions?