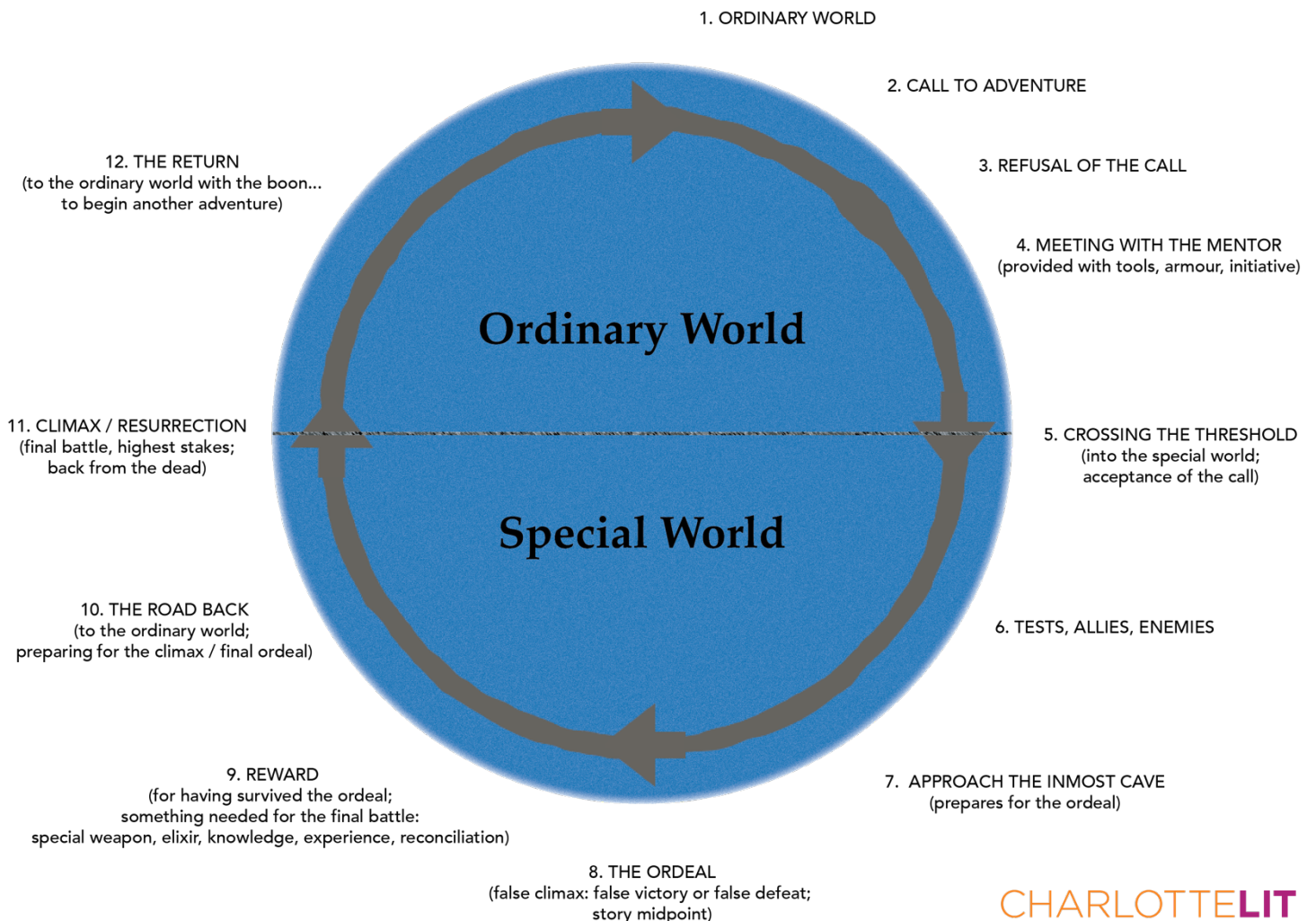


THE (CREATIVE) HERO'S JOURNEY

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The essence of **story** is that a character makes a journey (actual or metaphorical) through which they are changed. Many stories are structured as a **Hero's Journey**, as first identified by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (though he didn't use that term at the time; he called it the *monomyth*). This type of journey resonates with us because it is **archetypal**; it exists in humanity's collective unconscious. Here's one version of the Hero's Journey, adapted from Christopher Vogler.

The Hero's Journey



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Engaging in any large-scale creative project is itself a kind of journey that not coincidentally follows the classical Hero's Journey. Let's call it the **Creative Hero's Journey**, the journey taken by a creative hero: anyone who endeavors to create art.

(Slightly meta: if you're a writer using the Hero's Journey as your story model, you'll follow a similar path as your protagonist — but you'll be better informed about what's coming because you'll have this guide, which walks you through one version of the Hero's Journey and helps you map your current creative endeavor.)

1. The Ordinary World

The Hero is in her customary element—her Ordinary World. Most stories ultimately take us to a world that is new and alien to its Hero. Doing a large creative project is a foreign world even if we've done it before.

Describe your current creative practice.

2. The Call to Adventure

The Hero is presented with a problem, challenge or adventure. The stakes are established, and the goal is clear. To undertake the challenge, the Hero cannot remain in the Ordinary World.

What are you being called to create? What is its current state?

3. The Refusal of the Call

The Hero is reluctant, balks at the threshold of adventure. After all, she is facing the greatest fear: fear of the unknown.

What does refusal look like for you? How does it feel?

4. Meeting with the Mentor

Committing to the journey may require the assistance of a Mentor who might give advice, provide magical weapons, or give a swift kick in the pants to get the adventure going.

Who does or could serve as a mentor for you? What could they provide for you? What else might get you to accept?

5. Crossing the Threshold / Accepting the Call

The Hero fully enters the Special World for the first time. She is now fully committed to her journey; there's no turning back. Crossing into the Special World is an act of will often illustrated by the Hero crossing a physical barrier or threshold such as a door or bridge, or into the forest. This is our first view of the Special World, which is in sharp contrast to the Ordinary World.

What does the Special World look like? (Note: the world of the journey, not of the destination.)

What special skills, tools, or armor will you need?

What attitudes, behaviors, and habits will you need?

What will you need to let go of?

Will you go through the door?

6. ENCOUNTERING TESTS, ENEMIES & ALLIES

The Hero is forced to make allies and enemies in the Special World, and to pass certain tests that prepare her for greater ordeals ahead.

What are your (expected, day-to-day) tests?

Who/what are your enemies (internal and external)? How do they threaten you? How can you keep them from undermining your quest?

Who are your allies? How can they help you?

Are there any allies you fear will become enemies? How can you keep them on your side?

7. Approach the Inmost Cave

The Hero prepares for The Ordeal, the hardest battle she's had to fight. Before she enters/arrives, she rests, takes stock, makes a plan, gathers armor and weaponry. She knows this could make or break the mission.

The Ordeal is a major milestone, what will you need to help you push through?

8. The Ordeal

The Hero descends to the underworld where the object of the quest is hidden. She may experience a dark night of the soul. It might appear that all is lost. The Hero may face her greatest fear. She may succeed or fail, but it is a false victory or a false defeat, because this is a false climax. There is too much left to do.

What might The Ordeal represent for your project?

What will be the final / largest obstacles to getting there?

How will you overcome these obstacles? What else might you need?

9. Reward

Having survived death (beaten the dragon, slain the Minotaur), the Hero receives a Reward—something she will need for the final battle still ahead: special weapon, elixir, knowledge, experience, reconciliation.

How might you reward yourself for having made it this far?

What will you need for the next stage of the journey?

10. The Road Back

The Hero decides to return to the Ordinary World, which means entering the home stretch and preparing for the Climax (final ordeal). There may be additional tests, new allies, new enemies, and the loss of previous allies and enemies. There may be a reversal of fortune.

What happens on the road back? What challenges will you encounter?

What new allies will you need? How can you make use of them? How can you keep your old allies engaged?

11. Climax / Resurrection

The Hero fights the final battle, with the highest stakes. This is what she came on the journey to achieve.

What are the final obstacles to be overcome in bringing your creative project across the finish line?

12. The Return

The Hero emerges from the Special World and returns to the Ordinary World with her mission achieved. (If she does not, she's doomed to repeat the adventure until it is.) The Hero has absorbed lessons from her journey and is transformed into a new being by her experience.

What do you have in your possession at the end?

You are changed and your world is changed. How?

Is there another creative journey after this one? What might it be?