The Hero's Journey: Literature and Composition

Teacher Edition

Oak Meadow

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Teacher Edition Introduction

> *We are the hero of our own story.*
>
> **Mary McCarthy**

This teacher edition is written to accompany Oak Meadow's high school English course, *The Hero's Journey: Literature and Composition*. The teacher edition is designed for parents, tutors, and teachers who work with students using this course either independently as a homeschooler or as part of a school using Oak Meadow's curriculum. The course is designed to make it easy for students to work successfully on their own, but supervision, guidance, and assessment by an adult is expected. We hope you find this teacher edition helpful in guiding your student throughout the year.

Working with Your Student

Every student has different strengths and challenges, and every teacher brings a unique skill set to the student-teacher relationship. This course encourages students to develop a strong sense of original thought and the teacher's encouragement in this realm can be very beneficial. Whenever possible, initiate or participate in discussions about the readings, assignments, and issues. If possible, read the books at the same time as your student to make conversations more relevant and engaged. Encourage your student to form opinions based on their experiences and knowledge, and to express those opinions with conviction and confidence. Share your own thoughts and experiences, and demonstrate a willingness to view issues from multiple perspectives.

When assessing your student's work, it is recommended that you focus on concrete suggestions for improvement while being specific about where the student displays strong skills. This helps the student know exactly what they are doing well and what needs improvement. You will have to gauge how much praise and how much criticism to provide, based on what motivates your student. In general, it is good to keep in mind that the student has a full course of 36 lessons in which to improve skills and develop knowledge—it is often best to focus on two or three areas that need work at a time, and let others go so that the student is not overwhelmed, especially early in the course. Other areas that need attention can be emphasized as the student progresses through the year.

Depending on your student, you might ask for their input about ways you can support the learning process. Often high school students are still developing time management and organizational skills and can use help in this area. Some students benefit from having an adult take a keen interest in their work, while others prefer to work more independently. However you support your student, your thoughtful guidance and encouraging feedback can help your student stretch and grow.

Coursebook Introduction

What Is a Hero?

The theme of the hero's journey is an important focus for this course, yet it is not easily defined. Is the idea of heroism even a good one to promote and study? Is promoting the idea of heroism healthy for our society? Some people equate heroism with fame, but this course looks at the idea of heroism in a larger context. What does it mean to be a hero? What is the difference between a hero and someone who is not a hero?

Human history is full of journeys taken by people who, along the way, do extraordinary things. To some, such people and their achievements are considered heroic. Take, for example, Lewis and Clark, who in 1804 undertook an expedition across the United States at a time when the majority of the country was still wild. To many, their journey is legendary, given the trials and hardships they endured in order to map uncharted lands and learn about previously unknown cultures. But to others, who believe the explorers' journeys were exploitative and destructive to nature and indigenous peoples, Lewis and Clark are reviled.

What does it mean to be a hero and who gets to decide? Is being a hero just a matter of doing something out of the ordinary or something extreme? Is it possible for a store clerk to be a hero simply because they are able to work a long and unglamorous job to help put food on the family table? What about a shoeshine man outside a train station in New York City who is homeless and hungry but is able to greet people with a smile despite his hardship—is he a hero? This course looks at literature featuring ordinary people who find themselves in circumstances that require extraordinary acts—one way to define heroism—and examines these extraordinary acts in relation to the archetypal hero and the hero's journey.

All of the readings for this course were chosen because they explore important questions about what it means to be human. They ask readers difficult questions about the meaning of life and the way we value family and friends. They were also chosen because they embody our fascination with adventure, danger, and risk-taking. These books examine what it means to test one's strength of character through very difficult physical and emotional situations. Finally, they were chosen because they are examples of the literary arts in their highest form in terms of the complexity, depth, and clarity of their narratives.

As you begin your exploration of the hero's journey in literature, ask yourself, "What does a hero look like? How does a hero act? Could I be a hero?"

Course Materials

This coursebook contains all the instructions and assignments that you need to complete the course. In addition, the following books are used in this course:

- *The House of the Scorpion* by Nancy Farmer
- *Kidnapped* by Robert Louis Stevenson
- *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank
- *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer
- *Pygmalion* by George Bernard Shaw
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston
- *House of Light* by Mary Oliver
- *A Pocket Style Manual* by Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers
- *Write It Right: A Handbook for Student Writers* (Oak Meadow Books)
- Two blank journals (one for each semester)

Each of the readings for this course has been chosen for its spirit, its sense of adventure, and the strength of the characters in each story. They have also been chosen to help you develop an appreciation for good literature.

You will also need a dictionary for this course. Online dictionary sources should be supplemented with a print dictionary, such as *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*; *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*; or the *Pocket Oxford English Dictionary*, so you can compare definitions and absorb the nuances of a particular word. Since some of the projects in this course require research, you will also want access to a library and the internet.

You will be keeping a reader's journal during this course that will be filled with your ideas, questions, sketches, and designs that have been inspired by your readings. If you aren't familiar with the concept of a reader's journal, you can do an internet search for "reader's journal images" or "main lesson book images" to get an idea of the wide range of uses this book can have. Use your reader's journal to record references to meaningful or pivotal passages (remember to make note of page numbers!), write down observations, note unfamiliar words and their definitions, draw maps and diagrams of story elements, illustrate scenes, and doodle relevant images. Your reader's journal will be entirely original, created by you as you explore literary themes, settings, characters, and historical time periods. While the journal is for your own creative exploration, it is also a record of the effort you make to understand the literature you will be studying and to further discover what that literature means to you. You will be sharing

your journal with your teacher at the end of each semester (after lesson 18 and lesson 36), and specific journal assignments will be copied/scanned and shared with your teacher at the end of each unit. Your teacher will be looking for regular entries, a variety of uses (e.g., vocabulary words, questions, ideas, summaries, illustrations, etc.), and overall depth. These reader's journal assignments will be graded, but the journal is primarily a study tool for you.

Course Orientation

In this course, there are 36 lessons divided equally into two semesters. Each lesson represents one week of study (approximately five hours of work). In each lesson, you will find sections to guide your studies and deepen your understanding of the material.

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Digging Deeper gives you background information that helps you interpret the literature within its historical and cultural context.

Along the Way helps you identify core themes and concepts. The questions asked in this section are not assignments that need to be completed. They are simply ideas to help you to reflect upon the reading more fully.

What Do You Think? gives you an opportunity to discuss with someone in your family or community your thoughts and opinions about what you are reading. This section includes talking points that can help you consider alternate viewpoints, clarify your views, and practice persuasive speech and logical arguments. Usually you will need to complete the reading assignment before your discussion.

Writing Tip sections contain timely reminders to help you improve and refine your writing skills. These tips will refer you to relevant sections in *Write It Right* and *A Pocket Style Manual*, and you will be expected to demonstrate these skills and knowledge in your lesson assignments.

Definitions of unusual words can be found in the sidebar. Review these **before** each reading assignment.

An **Assignment Checklist** is included with each lesson, so you can see at a glance what is required and be able to check off assignments as you complete each one. Assignments will be fully explained in the lesson.

Share Your Work is found at the end of most lessons. This section provides reminders and information for students who are enrolled in Oak Meadow School and who are submitting work to their Oak Meadow teacher.

The **Appendix** contains important material that you will be expected to read and incorporate into your work throughout the year. Take some time to familiarize yourself with the information in the appendix.

Academic Expectations

The written work for this course includes comprehension and critical thinking questions, interpretive essays, a reader's journal, creative projects, and creative writing. Please follow the assignments in order and write out all your responses in full sentences, maintaining clear paragraph structure. Whenever possible, support your observations with examples, specific details, and direct quotations from the readings; include proper citations whenever necessary.

Please follow the assignments in order and write out all your responses in full sentences, maintaining clear paragraph structure (unless otherwise instructed).

You are expected to meet your work with integrity and engagement. Your work should be original and give an authentic sense of your thoughts and opinions rather than what you think the teacher reviewing your work wants to hear. When you use other sources, you are required to cite them accurately. Plagiarism, whether accidental or intentional, is a serious matter.

The **appendix** contains important material regarding Oak Meadow's academic expectations and original work guidelines, as well as information on plagiarism and citing your sources. It is your responsibility to make sure you understand the academic expectations and abide by them.

SHARE YOUR WORK

If you are enrolled in Oak Meadow School, you'll find a reminder at the end of every other lesson that instructs you to submit your work to your Oak Meadow teacher. Continue working on your next lessons while you are waiting for your teacher to send lesson comments. After you have submitted the first 18 lessons, you will receive a first semester evaluation and grade. At the end of 36 lessons, you will receive a final evaluation and grade.

Throughout this course, your teacher will be looking for evidence of mastery of each of the grammar skills and writing techniques presented in the Writing Tip section of each lesson. Refer to *Write It Right* or *A Pocket Style Manual* often, as they are excellent writing resources. You'll find a helpful glossary of grammatical terms in the back of *A Pocket Style Manual* (319). Use this glossary any time you come across a literary term or technique with which you are unfamiliar.

Please remember to stay in touch with your Oak Meadow teacher and share your comments, ideas, questions, and challenges. Your teacher is eager to help you!

Interdisciplinary Learning: The Cross-Pollination of Knowledge

Although this is a literature course, you will often find connections to history, science, geography, art, music, and other subjects. In the Digging Deeper section in particular, references are made to other disciplines and the way they have influenced literature and/or an author's life.

As a high school student, you may be taking world geography and environmental science courses at the same time as this course. Since literature connects to all areas of life, your experience in those courses will apply here. You are encouraged to come up with ideas for integrating what you are studying in other courses. Here are a few examples:

- Maps are an important component of many of the literature selections you will be reading this year. You will be tracing these heroes' journeys on maps both real and fictional, and you will be making your own maps as well. As you learn how landforms and people interact in your science and geography courses, you'll have the opportunity to create a map based on the literary journeys you read about in this course. You may find your scientific and geographical knowledge dovetailing nicely with your literary explorations.
- Environmental science is an important concept in several of our selections. Nature is almost another character in works like *Into the Wild* and *Kidnapped*, while *Their Eyes Were Watching God* features some extreme weather events as plot points. In addition, you will be able to apply the experimental strategies and scientific habits of thought to character and story analysis: What are the characters experiencing? What does their behavior indicate? What is their goal? What might happen next?

By integrating knowledge from your other courses, you may deepen your appreciation of literature as a window to universal experiences of life on Earth. Ideas, habits of thought, historical events, trends in art and music, and scientific breakthroughs all influence and inform one another—and all find their way into literature.

The Journey Begins

So what does it mean to be a hero? What does it mean to be on a hero's journey? This course explores the hero's journey as a path of discovery, challenge, and reward. *Your* path in life illustrates your own journey of discovery, challenge, and reward. Hopefully, you will be inspired by the lives of these heroes, both ordinary and extraordinary, and begin to see the heroism and adventure in the world all around you, as well as inside you.

UNIT I: Call to Adventure

A hero is no braver than an ordinary man, but he is brave five minutes longer.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Lessons 1–2

Have you ever wondered if you have what it takes to do something really courageous? Many people who have done heroic things have said afterward that they didn't feel brave, they just acted; they just did what needed to be done. Can you be fearful and still be a hero? Do heroes know they are on a heroic journey when it is happening? Do they feel heroic? In Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings trilogy, Frodo knows he's on a heroic journey, but he's often fearful and almost never feels heroic.

Have you ever wondered if you have what it takes to do something really courageous?

Life can be seen as a series of journeys. There are physical journeys, like a trip across the country or a hike in the woods. A career is another kind of journey, as is your education. Childhood is a journey. Relationships can be unique and varied journeys, where you always end up in a different place—emotionally, mentally, and sometimes geographically—from where you started. You'll be exploring these ideas and more in this course, beginning with the first two lessons, where you'll be introduced to the elements of the hero's journey.

Lesson

1

Arc of the Hero's Journey

How do you start a hero's journey? Or does a hero's journey find you? Is there an element of destiny involved? In this lesson, we'll analyze the archetype of the hero's journey. Make sure to read all of the sidebar sections and assignments before jumping into the reading assignment. This is a good habit to get into for all your lessons—it'll help you organize your time and clarify the goals of each lesson.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Read "The Arc of the Hero's Journey."
- ☐ Write a three-paragraph narrative about your personal helpers and mentors.
- ☐ Complete journal assignments.

Learning Objectives

- Study archetypal elements in literature and film.
- Examine the historical and cultural relevance of the hero's journey.
- Identify the stages of the hero's journey in familiar stories.

Assignments

Reading

Read, "The Arc of the Hero's Journey" (see the reading selection).

The course begins with an overview of the archetype of the hero's journey. Students are encouraged to read through the entire lesson, including the sidebar sections and all of the assignments, before starting their work.

Reader's Journal

You will begin using your journal book right away by writing down the stages of the hero's journey, which you'll refer to throughout this course. Often the assignments given for the reader's journal will be creative in nature, giving you the opportunity to explore what the reading means to you through drawing, creative writing, etc., but other times you'll use it for note-taking, so that all your notes are in one place and easy to access.

Your goal is to create a reader's journal that is not only a helpful study tool, but also a representation of your thoughtful engagement with the course. Take the time to make it look nice. Write with good

penmanship, add color to your illustrations and maps, keep your notes organized and neatly correct any mistakes, and keep an eye on the style of the overall presentation.

For inspiration, you can do an online image search for "Waldorf high school main lesson books."

- Start by creating a title page in your reader's journal, recording the title of the course and the date (or school year). You are encouraged to add decorative elements to this title page over the course of the year, perhaps creating a border and meaningful designs or sketches that refer to course material. On the next page, create a table of contents that you will add to when starting each new unit.
- Your first journal assignment is to create your own visual representation of the archetypal hero's journey, as presented in "The Arc of the Hero's Journey." Based on the reading selection below, use colored pencils, watercolor, crayons, paint, or collaged photographs and graphics to depict the stages of the hero's journey. Don't simply copy what is in this book— this will be your own interpretation. You might make a timeline, or choose a different shape to visualize your map of the journey. Think about your life so far. Is there a journey you've taken that mirrors the cycle of the hero's journey? Is there a family story that you can use to depict the journey circle? If so, use that as the basis for your drawing.

archetype *n*: the quintessential example or original model from which similar things are copied.

labyrinth *n*: a maze.

myth *n*: a traditional story that contains universal elements.

psyche *n*: the human soul, mind, or spirit.

threshold *n*: the bottom of a doorframe; an entrance or point of beginning.

Students begin using their reader's journal right away by writing down the stages of the hero's journey, which they'll refer to throughout this course. They will create a title page in their journal with the title of the course and the date (or school year). They are encouraged to add decorative elements to this title page. On the next page, a table of contents will be created that will be added to when starting each new unit.

The first journal assignment is to create a visual representation of the archetypal hero's journey, as presented in "The Arc of the Hero's Journey." Students might use colored pencils, watercolor, markers, paint, or collaged photographs and graphics to depict the stages of the hero's journey. They might make a timeline, or choose a different shape to visualize the map of the journey. They are instructed to create their own unique interpretation rather than copying what is in their coursebook.

Writing

Be sure to read all assignments for each lesson carefully before you begin working. Often a student misses a part of the assignment, or glances too quickly at it and misunderstands it, so take your time and make sure you know just what is expected for each assignment. Everyone appreciates work that is brilliant and creative, but it must also fulfill all the requirements of the assignment. By taking the time

to review all the assignments before beginning the lesson's reading, you can read with purpose and take relevant notes.

Often a student misses a part of the assignment or glances too quickly at it and misunderstands it, so encourage your student to read everything carefully before beginning.

- Write a personal narrative about the helpers and mentors you have encountered so far on your life's journey. Who have been your own helpers, guides, or teachers? Write a three-paragraph essay on how a helper or mentor has come to your aid in facing or overcoming an obstacle in your life. Make sure to include concrete examples. Be specific! What kind of help did you receive? Why did it make such a difference? If you are writing this assignment by hand, you should expect to fill up about two pages. If you are typing it on the computer, check the word count to make sure it is approximately 500 words (it doesn't have to be exact—the 450–550–word range is fine). Refer to the writing tip in this lesson for more information about essay writing, formatting, and punctuation.

Students should develop their ideas in a logical sequence over the course of the essay, and include specific examples of the help or guidance they received. This is a good opportunity to assess the student's skills in paragraphing, spelling, punctuation, and grammar. It's also a good time to check the ability to follow directions and stay on topic, and present ideas in a logical sequence. An excellent response will use correct form, provide specific details, and show a clear connection between the topic and the student's personal experience. Expect a three- to five-paragraph essay.

Writing Tip

In this lesson you are asked to write a personal narrative about the mentors in your life. Narratives tell a story, and personal narratives tell *your* story. Before you begin writing, read the following sections in *Write It Right:* "General Formatting," "Essay Writing," and "Punctuation Usage."

SHARE YOUR WORK

Feel free to contact your teacher at any time with questions or ideas. You will submit your work from this lesson after you finish the work for lesson 2. You are encouraged to submit your work digitally using the Google Drive course doc provided by your teacher. Work can be typed directly into the course doc or typed in another application and copied into the course doc. Make sure to number each assignment carefully.

If you are submitting work through the mail, use 8½" x 11" paper and print only on one side. Please format your typed documents with a standard font (such as Times New Roman), and use a font size, paragraph spacing, and margin setting that will make it easy for your teacher to read your work and provide comments. If you write by hand, please do so legibly, using only one side of the paper. Neatness counts! Make sure that your work is well organized and easy to read. Smudges and wrinkles detract from the legibility of your handwritten work, and do not make a very good impression.

Reading Selection:

The Arc of the Hero's Journey

In addition to all the great literature you'll be reading this year, this course has a theme or basic idea underlying every lesson: the hero's journey. For each literature selection, you will explore how the concept of the hero's journey applies and how it can help you expand your understanding of the literature and deepen your appreciation of it. Of course, each book also has its own themes, structure, and meaning, which you will explore as well. But the hero's journey is a very flexible, universal concept, and it can help tie each book into a larger story of human struggle, adventure, and self-discovery.

The hero's journey is an *archetype*. What's an archetype? An archetype is an idea or structure that serves as a model for many individual figures, whether they are characters, objects, or stories. Take superheroes, for example. You are probably familiar with many stories about them. Even though these stories are all different, there are certain characteristics that you can recognize as being common to superheroes: the hero has special powers, fights evil, and often wears a fantastic costume (usually to disguise their true identity). These elements are all part of the superhero archetype. Superhero stories are often written using elements of the hero's journey, but superheroes are different because they are have "super" powers; heroes are often ordinary people thrust into greatness by extraordinary circumstances.

An archetype is an idea or structure that serves as a model for many individual figures, whether they are characters, objects, or stories.

The hero's journey is an archetype introduced by the teacher and philosopher Joseph Campbell in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Campbell's idea is that the hero's journey underlies all stories—myths, folktales, novels, plays, and movies—from all cultures in all periods of human history. According to Campbell, the hero's journey involves some very basic ideas about what it means to be human, and it can illuminate anything you read as well as help you to understand yourself and your own journey.

Joseph Campbell, Mythologist and Author

Joseph Campbell (1904–1987) was born in New York City, where he encountered many different cultures, people, and works of art. He loved to visit the American Museum of Natural History, where he encountered Native American sculptures, totem poles, and figures. He was fascinated with mythology from an early age, and continued studying it throughout his education at Columbia University. His studies also brought him into contact with many of the artistic and intellectual movements of the day, such as the literature of James Joyce and Thomas Mann, the artwork of Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse, and the psychological studies of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. In all of these very different expressions of the human spirit, Campbell began to see common threads. This is when he began work on his idea that all human myths and legends, no matter where or when they are from, express something deep and profound about what it means to be human.

The Hero with a Thousand Faces

After many years of studying myths, legends, and stories from all over the world, Campbell published his first book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, in 1949. Within a short time, the book achieved the status of a classic. In it, Campbell argues that there is a single story, or pattern, that lies at the foundation of every single story ever written or told. It is expressed in countless different ways and disguised in the individual cultures and histories from which it comes, but it also has several basic elements that can be recognized time and time again in stories about the human condition. Campbell called this pattern the *monomyth*.

Monomyth (literally, "one myth") is another name for the hero's journey. In his book, Campbell outlines the structure of the monomyth, illustrating each element with dozens of examples drawn from myths throughout history and around the world. Many of these myths are familiar to us, while many are from cultures about which very little is known. They do not all follow the monomyth idea exactly, but they all share certain basic elements that are recognizable as coming from common desires, fears, and hopes.

Of particular influence on Campbell during his development of the hero's journey concept were the ideas of pioneering psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). Freud felt that dreams were more than just stories people tell themselves during sleep; instead, he saw them as expressions of very basic human desires and fears. Through the process of analyzing dreams, Freud started to recognize symbols and ideas that seemed to be common to everyone, and he thought that understanding these elements could help us learn important things about ourselves and the way our minds work. This was the basis for Freud's development of psychoanalytic theory.

Campbell, in turn, realized that the myths he had been studying and Freud's dream symbolism were all expressions of these same basic desires and fears: that dreams and myths come from the same place deep in the human psyche. In Campbell's theory, they are all part of the grand story human beings tell about themselves, over and over again, throughout history.

But how can a single story, no matter how basic, lie underneath all the myths and legends of human history? The great variety of stories that are out there seems to make this impossible. Well, not surprisingly, the basis of the hero's journey theory is rooted in an experience that every human being shares: our own birth.

How can a single story, no matter how basic, lie underneath all the myths and legends of human history?

Every single human being grows inside a mother's womb. The mother protects the child within herself, while the baby's body and mind develops. This creates a duality—two people who are also one. Even after birth, human mothers typically remain with their children, protecting and nurturing them, far longer than other animal species. This generates a deep psychological connection. The mother is the first object of a child's love, and she becomes a symbol for everything that is beautiful, protective, and perfect.

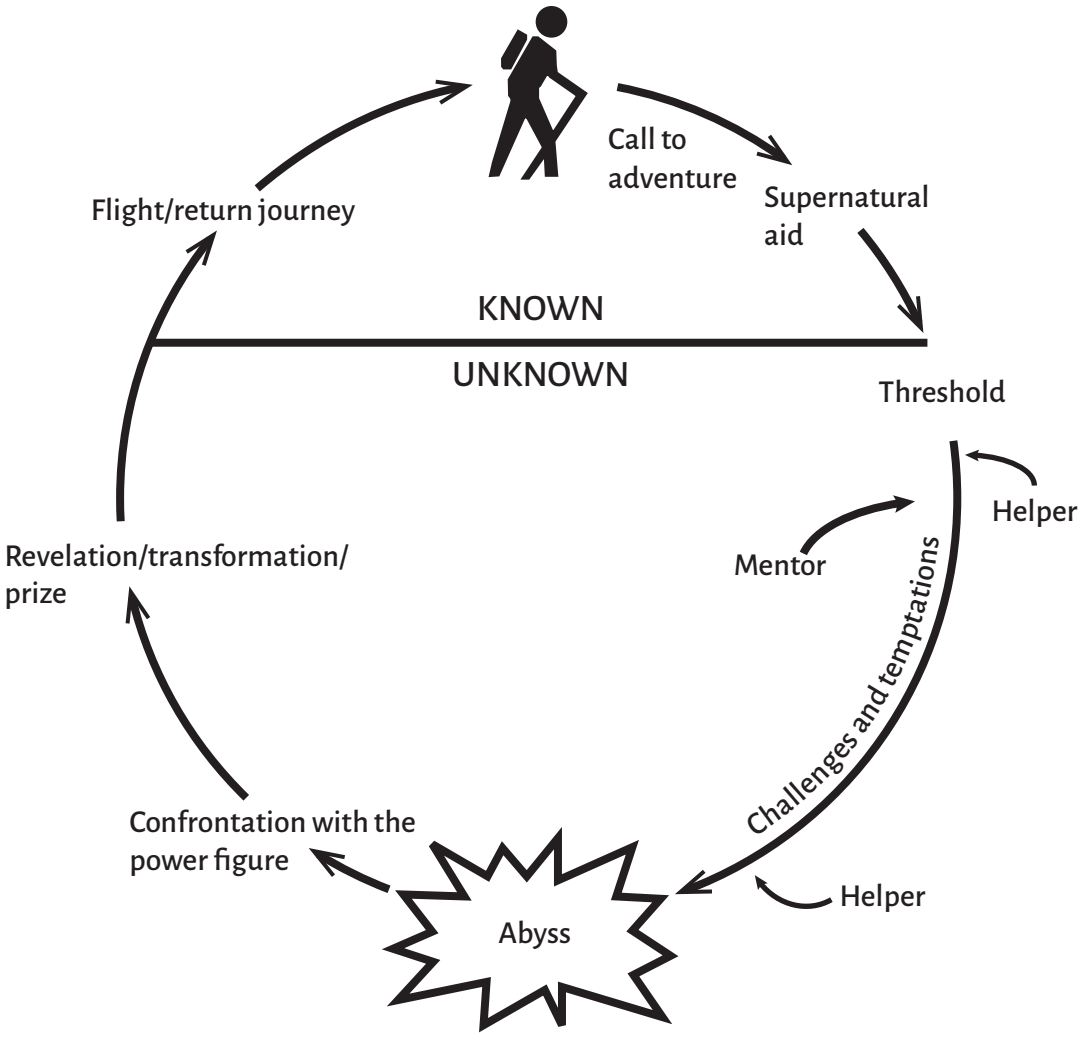
Into this idealized duality, of course, the father is introduced. He becomes the third corner of a triangle and is seen by the child as a rival for the mother's love. The child reveres the father as a leader and teacher, but also fears the father's power and authority. You may be familiar with this dynamic as the

"Oedipus complex," a psychological condition that was introduced by Sigmund Freud but is actually based on the ancient Greek myth of King Oedipus, who murdered his father and married his mother.

This is the seed and root of Freud's ideas about human psychology, as well as Campbell's ideas about myth and story. This basic triangle—mother, child, and father—forms the basis of the hero's journey. In the journey, the child as hero must find their own way, separating from the familiar, protective force, and eventually coming to terms with, or confronting, an all-powerful force. The reward at the end of this journey is wisdom, self-knowledge, and a new beginning.

The Hero's Journey Cycle

Now that you have a basic understanding of the concept of the hero's journey, you can look more closely at the elements it contains. Not all of these elements are present in every single story; in fact, part of the fun of this course will be to see how each of our selected works of literature contains a unique mixture of these elements to create its own version of the hero's journey. But Campbell has identified these as the basic steps in the journey, common to the vast majority of human myths and legends.



Call to adventure

In the beginning, the hero lives in the "real world." It is familiar, safe, and mundane. It can be compared to the safety of the mother's womb, which each human being must leave to venture into the world. The hero is often a figure of some notoriety. Perhaps their arrival has been foretold by a prophet or sage. Perhaps they appear to be a commoner but are secretly the heir of a powerful monarch, wizard, or god. Sometimes the hero has a peculiar attribute or quality that makes them stand out from the crowd. In cases like this, the hero will often seem destined to embark upon the fateful journey.

Then something happens that reveals the existence of another world—a world of magic, fantasy, or adventure that the hero was unaware of before. It can happen as a result of an accident, a random chance, or a blunder. Often the call to adventure is accompanied by the arrival of a herald, a character who appears to summon the hero to adventure. The herald introduces the hero to the unknown world and sets a task or quest that must be accomplished.

Supernatural aid, helpers, and mentors

Oftentimes, in preparation for the great journey, the hero is provided with assistance in the form of a supernatural object, magic talisman, or powerful weapon. Sometimes, protective gods bestow a gift upon the hero. The hero may be given a tool or talisman to protect them on a journey through darkness, danger, and the unknown. Other times the assistance comes from a more mundane source, such as a parent or elderly figure. According to Campbell, this assistance represents the benign, protective force of destiny. The hero's life circumstances "choose" them for this journey, but there is a reason for this: they are equal to the task, whether or not they know it. The same force of destiny that propels them into extraordinary circumstances ensures that they are not without help.

Threshold

Now that they are ready to begin the journey in earnest, the hero crosses a threshold, the boundary between the familiar world and the dark, unknown world of adventure. Perhaps the hero enters a forest or sets out to sea. Or the threshold could be a cave leading to a subterranean underworld. Perhaps the hero goes to space. The unknown world could even be something more ordinary: the other side of town or the basement or attic. In all cases, a line is crossed. The hero has stepped out of normal life and into a world of new experiences, unknown dangers, and magical rewards.

Sometimes the threshold is guarded by a sentry figure or a challenge that must be overcome before the hero can cross the border. Whether guarded by a sentry or not, the threshold represents the first obstacle the hero must overcome, and it is the beginning of the difficulties and struggles that the hero will encounter on their journey.

Challenges and temptations

As the hero progresses on their journey, they will encounter several challenges and temptations. These are tests of the hero's courage, resolve, and confidence. The hero may come up against monsters, traps, or puzzles. These are all obstacles that must be overcome in order to proceed on the journey.

Abyss

The unknown world of adventure through which the hero travels can come in many different forms. This could be a true underworld, a sort of hell, below the surface of the Earth. Or it could be a dark forest, a magical fantasyland, or even the belly of a whale. In every case, the underworld represents the land of the unknown through which the hero must travel to attain the ultimate wisdom.

Confrontation with the power figure

The climax of the hero's journey comes when all the trials, ordeals, and barriers have been overcome. The hero reaches the heart of the underworld and confronts the chief villain of the story, which could be represented by a fearsome monster, an angry god, or some other mysterious figure. In almost all cases, this figure represents the father, the all-powerful authority figure. Whatever form the father figure takes, it represents the crucial point of the journey. The hero must stand their ground, overcome this powerful figure, and then reconcile with them in order to achieve the ultimate prize.

Revelation/transformation/prize

And what is the ultimate prize? Sometimes it is a treasure or an object of great power. It could be a charm, a weapon, or a medicine. It could be the saving of the world from some global catastrophe or the attainment of inner peace or true love. No matter what the symbol is, it represents wisdom and revelation. By overcoming all their trials, the hero has proven themselves strong, confident, and worthy, and is rewarded with self-knowledge and the freedom to forge their own life. Campbell calls this prize the ultimate boon. (If you're not familiar with the word *boon*, look it up!)

Flight/return journey

After being granted the ultimate boon, the hero must leave the underworld and return to the "normal" world. This is not always easy: Sometimes the hero must steal the boon and flee back to the normal world, chased by monsters and guardians. Sometimes the hero encounters more trials and obstacles on the return journey. Sometimes they choose not to return at all. In any case, there is another threshold where the hero will cross from the underworld back into the world of light, and there is often another guardian that must be overcome to cross this second threshold.

Return

Once the hero overcomes the return threshold, they have mastered both worlds and often earn the right to come and go between them at will. Carrying the prize earned in the confrontation with the power figure, the hero makes the triumphant return to the familiar world of family and friends. The journey is complete, and they have been transformed in the process. The challenge here is to keep the wisdom gained and incorporate it into normal life.

The hero's journey is really a journey of self-discovery. We must all leave the familiar, comfortable world of our birth and explore strange, and sometimes dangerous, places in order to gain the ultimate prize: knowledge of ourselves. As the old saying goes, *you've got to go there to come back*. In this sense, we are all the hero of our own lives.

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Hero's Journey Archetype: Theseus and the Minotaur

To illustrate the structure of the hero's journey archetype, we will look at a familiar story from Greek mythology, the story of Theseus and the Minotaur. You may be familiar with this story, so you may already be thinking of the ways it fits the hero's journey idea. It does not follow every element of the monomyth structure—no story does—but it will serve as a good example of how the hero's journey plays out.

Theseus and the Minotaur in the Labyrinth
by Edward Burne-Jones, 1861
(Image credit: preraphaelites.org)

Theseus was a demigod (half god, half human), whose father was the sea-god Poseidon. But the king of Athens, Aegeus, was also his father (according to the legend, his mother Aethra mated with both Aegeus and Poseidon in the same night). Theseus was raised in Athens by his mother. When he came of age, he recovered the sandals and sword of his father, Aegeus, from underneath a huge rock, thus proving his royal blood and divine strength. Theseus struck out to seek his destiny and found his way to Crete.

Crete was being threatened by a hideous beast called the Minotaur. The Minotaur was a huge, powerful man with the head of a bull who was born as a punishment to Minos, King of Crete. Minos had prayed to Poseidon for a snow-white bull to sacrifice. He was given a bull, but, instead of sacrificing it, he decided to keep it, which angered the gods, who caused the king's wife Pasiphae to fall in love with the bull. Soon after, Pasiphae gave birth to the Minotaur.

To protect the people of Crete from the Minotaur, Minos imprisoned it in a huge labyrinth underneath the palace in the city of Knossos. To placate the beast, Minos sacrificed seven youths and seven maidens every year by sending them into the labyrinth. They would get lost and be devoured by the Minotaur.

Theseus, discovering this situation on his arrival, vowed to rescue the people of Crete by slaying the Minotaur. To get into the labyrinth, he took the place of one of the sacrificial victims. But Ariadne, the

daughter of King Minos, had fallen in love with Theseus and had given him some special tools to help him: a sword and a ball of thread. He would unwind the thread as he traveled deeper into the labyrinth, so that after he had slain the Minotaur he would be able to find his way out. In this way, Theseus triumphs in the end, showing that he is able to do what no one else has.

As you can see, the story of Theseus clearly shows many of the elements of the hero's journey. Theseus is both god and man and is of royal blood. The labyrinth is the underworld, a dark unknown realm of danger and reward. Ariadne represents his supernatural aid, helping him with special tools that allow him to overcome the obstacles of the labyrinth. And the all-powerful Minotaur is his final confrontation. The half-man, half-god hero meets the half-man, half-beast enemy and defeats him, thus coming into his own as hero and conqueror. Then he makes his return journey out of the labyrinth and back into the world of light with the assistance of his supernatural aid.

Modern Manifestations of the Hero's Journey

You can probably think of many stories that share elements of the hero's journey. To help illustrate these connections, let's look at some contemporary films and books that demonstrate each of the stages of the hero's journey.

- ***Magical/universal birth:*** In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (J. K. Rowling), we find out that, as a baby, Harry Potter was marked with a lightning bolt scar, an indication of his magical birthright. In George Lucas's *Star Wars* saga, Luke Skywalker and his twin sister, Leia, are likewise hidden at birth to safeguard their lives.
- ***Call to adventure:*** In *Star Wars: Episode IV,* Luke Skywalker is first called to adventure by the arrival of the droids C-3PO and R2-D2 who bring news of the galactic war and of the princess in need of rescue. The droids represent the heralds, introducing Luke to the unknown, dangerous world that is his destiny. In *The Hunger Games* (Suzanne Collins), Katniss Everdeen is abruptly called when her sister's name is drawn for the "games," and, in an instinctive move to protect her sister, Katniss volunteers as tribute.
- ***Supernatural aid:*** In L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy meets the good witch Glinda shortly after her arrival in Oz. Glinda bestows upon Dorothy the magical slippers. Throughout her adventure, these slippers protect Dorothy from the Wicked Witch of the West and also provide her with the means to get home at the end of the story.
- ***Threshold:*** In the Wachowskis' film *The Matrix*, Neo must become disconnected from the Matrix to learn his true nature. This represents an interesting twist in the hero's journey: his threshold is the departure *from* the Matrix *into* the "real world." Once he is there, he can reach his full potential and return to the Matrix as a powerful figure. In J. K. Rowling's first Harry Potter story (*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*), Harry needs a strong dose of courage and faith in the train station to cross the threshold onto Platform $9\frac{3}{4}$.
- ***Challenges and temptations:*** In the film *Finding Nemo*, the clownfish Marlon encounters perilous obstacles in the form of deadly sharks, explosive mines, and stinging jellyfish in order to rescue

his son, Nemo. A great example of a temptation can be seen in the Rick Riordan book *Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief*, when Percy and his friends enter the Hotel Lotus and become seduced by the lights, excitement, and the special food (the lotus flower) that hypnotizes them into complacency. In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C. S. Lewis, Edmund is unable to resist the temptation of Turkish delight and falls under a spell that leads everyone into great danger.

- ***Underworld:*** *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Lewis Carroll) is a fantastical, magical representation of the underworld. Alice spends most of the story in Wonderland, an unpredictable fantasy realm that she reaches by falling down a rabbit hole. In Stephenie Meyer's Twilight series, Bella finds her way into the world of vampires and werewolves, and her journey through that world is fraught with danger. The macabre arena of *The Hunger Games* (Collins) is the underworld through which Katniss journeys.
- ***Confrontation with the father:*** Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars: Episode V* must confront the villain Darth Vader, who turns out to be his father. In the film *Tron: Legacy*, Sam Flynn must travel into the computer "grid" that his father created in order to rescue him and defeat the evil avatar Clu, a character based on and resembling his father. In James Cameron's movie *Avatar*, Jake Sully must defeat his former Marine commander in a fierce final battle to save the planet of Pandora. The deadliest adversary for Harry Potter (Rowling) is Lord Voldemort, the wizard who killed Harry's father and mother.
- ***Revelation/transformation/prize:*** The idea of a prize or treasure is common to many adventure stories. King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table searched for the Holy Grail, the cup that Jesus drank from at the Last Supper. Pirate stories, like the film series Pirates of the Caribbean, usually feature actual treasure, often buried or hidden. In Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings series, we have a twist: Frodo's objective is to *get rid of* the prize, the One Ring, by destroying it in the fires of Mount Doom. Instead of a physical treasure, the hero may also win knowledge, often in the form of self-revelation. In *The Matrix Reloaded* (Wachowski), Neo finally comes face-to-face with the Architect and learns the true nature of the Matrix. In the film *The Sixth Sense*, the hero (played by Bruce Willis) learns something amazing about himself.
- ***Flight/return journey:*** Homer's classical epic poem *The Odyssey* is all about a return journey: Odysseus's return home after the fall of Troy. In *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Baum), Dorothy must click her heels together three times and repeat, "There's no place like home," to be transported back to Kansas. Sometimes monsters or other adversaries chase the returning hero as he attempts to get home with the prize. In the film *Independence Day*, the two heroes (played by Will Smith and Jeff Goldblum) must plant a computer virus in the alien mother ship and then get out before it explodes. Oftentimes, the underworld environment is in the process of destroying itself as the hero escapes. This is the case in *Star Wars: Episode IV* as well as in Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Fall of the House of Usher."
- ***Return:*** In the book *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (Tolkien), the hobbits must overcome a new challenge as soon as they return home: Saruman, a former minion of Sauron's, has taken over the Shire and must be routed before peace can be restored. In *Ender's Game* (Orson Scott

Card), Ender successfully completes his hero's journey by committing to finding a new home planet for the nearly extinct foes.

In all the examples discussed above, the story is exploring one or more elements of the hero's journey archetype. You may be wondering whether all of these writers and filmmakers constructed their stories to match Joseph Campbell's theory of the monomyth structure. Apart from George Lucas and *Star Wars*, the answer is no. The basic idea of the hero's journey is not that writers use these elements all the time because they like them. Rather, it is that these elements and symbols are generated by the human psyche, by the deep, personal experience of birth shared by all human beings. Because this structure is an integral part of human psychology, it is present in *all* stories, whether the writer intends it or not. This is the central revelation of Joseph Campbell's work: that our myths and stories all share a deep symbolic structure and can tell us something about ourselves, simply because we created them. They resonate with us.

The Hero's Journey in This Course

Of course, there is a big difference between a myth and a movie. Myths come from folklore, storytelling, history, and dreams. They are not "written" by any particular person, and investigating them is often more an act of archaeology than of literary criticism. By contrast, movies like the Harry Potter series are made by large modern corporations and written by people who are often very familiar with Campbell's ideas and the hero's journey in general. This means that an artist can choose to utilize the structure and symbols of the hero's journey, consciously. Or, the artist can just as easily *reject* those symbols, deliberately creating a story that does *not* easily match the hero's journey. Amazingly, though, the hero's journey will still apply since, as explained above, elements of it are present in *all* stories from *all* time periods.

In this course, you will be applying the hero's journey concept where it naturally fits. For each literature selection, you will look for a few of the archetypal symbols and elements, but also be thinking about each story on its own terms, from its own perspective, and in its own tradition.

You'll be reading many different types of literature in this course, including poetry, nonfiction, and drama (plays). But even in the stories based on true events, the basic movement is there. In *Into the Wild*, Chris McCandless leaves home and travels all around the United States, heading for the great unknown. Anne Frank, in *The Diary of a Young Girl*, enters an underworld of sorts when she and her family go into hiding in Amsterdam. In *Pygmalion*, Eliza Doolittle undergoes a profound transformation and gains the ultimate prize: a sense of her own self-worth.

In addition to looking for elements of the hero's journey in these stories, you will be analyzing symbols, characters, and settings that are unique to those stories. You will also be discussing writing style, tone, dialogue, and the other basic literary elements.

The hero's journey is an additional prism through which we are looking at literature. It is our hope that it will deepen and enrich your appreciation of literature while also allowing each book's own brilliance to shine.

Lesson

2

House of Light

Do you sometimes ask yourself questions that are difficult to answer? Often a journey begins by looking inward: the drive to move forward, to take the path into the unknown, comes from within, often prompted by soul-searching questions. Poetry is sometimes called the language of the soul, so you'll begin your journey with a poem from Mary Oliver's luminescent and lyrical collection, *House of Light*.

Learning Objectives

- Analyze a poem.
- Understand figurative language.
- Explore literary terms: metaphor, personification, imagery.

Digging Deeper

Mary Oliver is widely regarded as one of the most talented American poets of our time. She was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1984 and won the National Book Award for Poetry in 1992. She was the recipient of many other awards as well as several honorary doctorates.

Oliver was born in 1935 and spent a great deal of her life in Provincetown, Massachusetts. She was known to be an avid walker, taking daily walks along the shores and wild places of Cape Cod. Nature inspired her work, as you will discover as you read her poems. Oliver was adept at evoking the beauty of the very ordinary. She died in 2019, leaving behind a powerful literary legacy.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Read "The Buddha's Last Instruction" in *House of Light*.
- ☐ Answer questions in complete sentences.
- ☐ Write one to two pages on the phrase "make of yourself a light."
- ☐ Complete journal assignments.

Along the Way

Learning how to read and understand a poem takes practice. It helps to approach poetry with an open mind and no prior expectations.

> Most readers make three false assumptions when addressing an unfamiliar poem. The first is assuming that they should understand what they encounter on the first reading, and if they don't, that something is wrong with them or with the poem. The second is assuming that the poem is a kind of code, that each detail corresponds to one, and only one, thing, and unless they can crack this code, they've missed the point. The third is assuming that the poem can mean anything readers want it to mean. (Edward Hirsch, "How to Read a Poem.")

As you read, work with, and hopefully enjoy Mary Oliver's poems throughout this course, you'll find guidelines and leading questions to help you develop skills in interpreting poetry.

Assignments

Reading

Read "The Buddha's Last Instruction" in Mary Oliver's *House of Light* (4) according to the guidelines below.

Guidelines for Reading Poetry

Billy Collins, an American poet who served as the Poet Laureate of the United States from 2001–2003, has this to say about poetry:

> The way poetry is taught is with great emphasis on the interpretation. So we have this thing, the poem, and we want to create this other thing called the interpretation of the poem, which then almost begins to compete with the poem, and in the worst cases, replaces the poem. So once we have the interpretation we can actually discard the poem. . . . The question, what does a poem mean, is a deadening question. . . . A better question, I think, than what does a poem mean, is how does a poem get where it's going. So instead of seeing it as something to be reduced to some other text, to see a poem as a journey . . . to notice where it turns, and how it expands or contracts, or becomes funny or serious, how it moves around through itself . . . ("How have your teachers shaped you?" *Big Think*).

figurative *adj*: a nonliteral representation; symbolic.

imagery *n*: visually descriptive language; mental pictures used to describe things or ideas.

metaphor *n*: a figure of speech in which two dissimilar things are shown to have something in common, or in which one thing is symbolic of something quite different.

personification *n*: the attribution of human characteristics to something nonhuman.

There is no one right way to approach a poem, but if you are new to poetry, these guidelines may be helpful.

- First, read the poem once before you continue on to the instructions below. Read it aloud, just experiencing the sound and rhythm of the words as a kind of music. (Stop here, and read the poem before going on.)
- Next, read the poem aloud several more times, speaking slowly. This helps you attend to each carefully chosen word. Use a natural tone of voice—no need to give a dramatic reading like an actor on stage. Let the words "speak" for themselves. Pause only when punctuation dictates, not at the end of each line break (which can interrupt the flow of the words).
- Now read the poem again, this time paying attention to how the line breaks encourage you to phrase things or pause. You don't have to pause at the end of each line; instead, pause when you feel it fits or emphasizes the meaning of the words. Remember to read slowly. Notice whether reading according to line breaks gives the poem a different feel or changes your understanding.
- Number each line for easy reference. Read the poem again, with a pencil in hand, and identify and define any words you do not know.
- Read the poem one more time. These techniques allow you to gain a strong sense of the poem as a whole before you continue studying, analyzing, or interpreting it.

As you work with Mary Oliver's poetry throughout this course, we'll provide more tips and techniques for understanding poetry. You'll find the full guidelines in *Write It Right*.

> *Poems are like dreams; you put into them what you don't know you know.*
>
> **Adrienne Rich**

Reader's Journal

In your reader's journal, illustrate an image from the poem, or design/doodle a graphic that somehow relates to it. Choose an image that resonates with you, and write a descriptive caption beneath it.

Students are asked to illustrate an image from the poem that resonates with them and to write a descriptive caption beneath it.

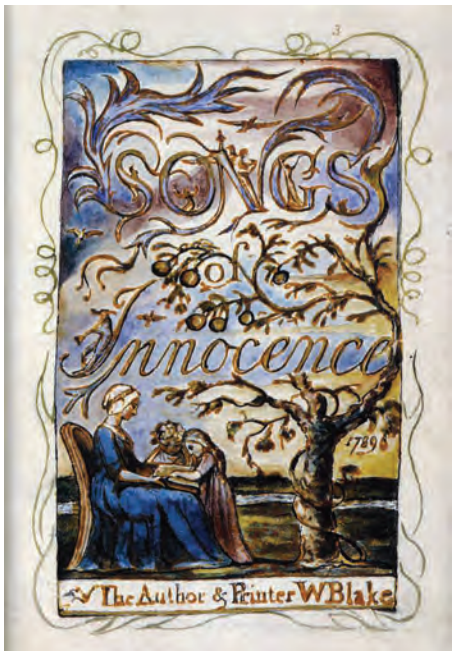
Writing

Remember to read through all the assignments first so you have a full sense of your lesson goals. For all writing assignments, keep in mind that the most important part of the writing process is **rewriting**. After you have finished writing your responses, read over your work carefully and critically. Did you express yourself clearly and fully? Revise your work to improve clarity and depth, and then *proofread* for

spelling errors, grammar mistakes, and anything that doesn't say what you mean it to say.

Always use the spellchecker on your computer, but don't let it become your only means of proofreading. The computer is clever, but not half as intelligent as you are. For example, if you misspell *from* as *form*, the computer will not flag it because it knows that *form* is a word; the computer doesn't know that it isn't the word you meant. Always proofread your document carefully, using the most powerful tool available to you: your own brain.

Students are asked to keep in mind that the most important part of the writing process is rewriting. Encourage your student to read over all work carefully and critically, revise to improve clarity and depth, and then proofread for spelling errors, grammar mistakes, and awkward phrasing.



***Songs of Innocence*, from an illustrated collection of poems by William Blake, 1794 (Image credit: Web Gallery of Art)**

1. Answer the following questions in complete sentences. Some questions have multiple parts and require several responses. In this course, you will often be asked to "support" your thoughts or answer—this means to explain yourself by using information and specific details (usually from the reading assignment) to justify your response and show the logic or reasoning behind it.

   a. What is the Buddha's last instruction? How might the Buddha's last instruction be a call to adventure?

   In this poem, the Buddha's last instruction is "Make of yourself a light." Students may see this as an encouragement for people to do something with their lives to light the way or lead others. Students may compare it, as Oliver does, to the light of a new day and the new beginning it signifies.

   b. Explore the literal and figurative meaning of the word light. Write down the multiple meanings. Which definition of light do you think fits the poem best? Why?

   Students may list words like *strong, role model, moral,* and *universal good* as figurative meanings of light. Students will give individual opinions about how literal and figurative meanings fit the poem, and why.

   c. Examine the imagery in lines 4–10. See if you can identify an instance of personification in these lines. Give examples.

   Examples of personification are found in the phrases "tear off its many clouds of darkness" and "send up the first signal" to describe the coming of dawn. These actions are attributed to "the east" as though this quadrant of the sky was a being capable of tearing and sending signals.

d. See if you can identify in which line the poem takes a turn and shifts from an exposé of the scene to something more introspective. Support your thoughts with examples and details.

Shifts in tone are felt in line 21 ("I am touched everywhere by its yellow waves") and then again in line 28 ("clearly I'm not needed, yet I feel myself turning into something of inexplicable value") as the focus of the poem turns inward.

e. Who is/are the hero/es of the poem? The Buddha? The narrator? The members of the crowd? Support your answer.

This question asks students to choose the poem's more influential character. Answers will vary and should include a clear explanation of how this person influences the poem or leaves an impression on the reader.

f. In lines 28–29, the narrator states, "Clearly I'm not needed, yet I feel myself turning into something of inexplicable value." Why might the narrator say this? How might this connect to the unique yet universal birth of the hero archetype?

This line points to the experience of rebirth felt by the narrator, influenced by the combination of the Buddha's words and the beauty of the dawn sky. A strong response will draw a clear parallel between this sense of rebirth or newness and the concept of birth as a universal experience and as part of the archetypal hero's journey.

g. In the last line, why are the members of the crowd frightened? What might this be a metaphor about?

The "frightened crowd" may refer to the lost souls looking to the Buddha for guidance, or may refer to the fear and uncertainty the listeners feel when charged by the Buddha to "Make of yourself a light." Students may have a different impression of this sense of fear, perhaps seeing it as a metaphor for self-doubt, death and rebirth, or the struggle between good and evil within us.

2. Write one to two pages on how you would live your life if your goal was to "make of yourself a light." What does that mean to you? What would it look like? What would you do? There are no right or wrong answers here. Your goal is to explain your ideas in a thoughtful, organized way. You will be assessed on the care you take in crafting your answer. See the writing tip for ideas on how to get started.

Students are encouraged to write a personal reflection that incorporates the poem's theme in a relevant way. It may be helpful to have your student discuss ideas before writing. You might suggest looking at future goals or possibilities within the larger context of the kind of person they would like to become. A strong response will emphasize specific correlations between the figurative meaning of the phrase "make of yourself a light" and the ethical, social, or spiritual aspects of future possibilities. Evidence that students completed the prewriting exercises as directed may include a well-organized essay and a logical connection between ideas.

Writing Tip

You have a challenging writing exercise in assignment 2 of this lesson. A prewriting exercise can help you organize your thoughts before you begin. Freewriting, clustering, outlining, and using the journalistic method are prewriting techniques that you can experiment with. See "Prewriting Exercises" in *Write It Right* for guidelines on how to use these techniques to get your writing project off to a good start.

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed lesson 2, send both lesson 1 and lesson 2 to your teacher using the Google Drive course doc sent by your teacher. Copy or scan the journal pages from both lessons. These can be sent to your teacher in a separate email or linked to your course doc. When your work is ready for review, let your teacher know by using the "Email collaborator" function on your course doc (found under the File menu). Include a note letting your teacher know which lessons are ready for review. Whether you are submitting lessons online using your course doc or sending them through the mail, make sure that each assignment is clearly numbered and complete. If you have any questions about any of the assignments in these lessons, contact your teacher before submitting your work. As soon as you have submitted the lessons, proceed to lesson 3. Your teacher will provide you with lesson feedback promptly, but in the meantime, keep working on your next lessons.

Lesson

6

The House of the Scorpion: Age 14 and *La Vida Nueva*

Have you ever wondered why you were born or what your purpose is here on Earth? When Matt turns 14, El Patron falls ill and Matt finally finds out the real reason he was created. Unexpected help arrives from his mentors, Celia and Tam Lin, and Matt is forced to journey forth on his own in search of his freedom and *la vita nueva*—a new life.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Read chapters 23–38 in *The House of the Scorpion*.
- ☐ Use vocabulary words figuratively.
- ☐ Write a story summary.
- ☐ Make up a moralistic story, and refute it as if you were Matt.
- ☐ Make a two-column list comparing Matt's "prisons."
- ☐ Complete journal assignments.

Learning Objectives

- Explore the figurative use of language.
- Write a story summary.
- Make a comparative list.

Digging Deeper

When Matt reaches puberty, he finds himself confronting El Patron—the father figure—by questioning the old man's actions for the first time. Once Matt understands everything, he knows what he must do. However, fleeing to Aztlan doesn't bring the immediate relief and rescue Matt had hoped for. It's a bit like the expression "out of the frying pan and into the fire" as things go from bad to worse.

Matt goes through the hero's journey archetypal stages of abyss and death while in the hands of the Keepers at the plankton factory. True to form, Matt's hero's journey concludes with a return home, as he cannot truly complete his heroic journey without returning and using his new knowledge to right what is wrong.

What Do You Think?

Matt's personal code of honor comes into play prominently during his time at the plankton factory. He speaks up when he feels something is wrong even though he knows he would be treated better if he kept silent. He refuses to falsely confess to things he hasn't done or doesn't believe are wrong, but then reverses himself and "confesses" in order to save his friend Fidelito from punishment. Do you think you would act as Matt did, or would the drive for self-preservation be stronger than the urge to stand on

principle? Find someone older than you, someone with a bit of life experience, with whom to discuss this topic. Ask if they have ever had to choose between principles and self-preservation. Has this person ever taken the easy path to avoid trouble? Have you?

Assignments

principle *n*: a rule or fundamental truth that governs one's actions.

prominent *adj*: important; outstanding or notable.

subservient *adj*: submissive; acting in a servile or subordinate manner.

Reading

Read chapters 23–38 in The *House of the Scorpion* (230–380).

Reader's Journal

Make your final additions to your illustrated poem, list of questions, and comparisons. You will use these in your final project in the next lesson.

Students will make their final additions to their journal assignments.

Writing

1. Define each vocabulary word and then write sentences about the story using the vocabulary words figuratively instead of literally. Feel free to use different forms of the word. For instance, *anemic* doesn't always refer to iron-deficient blood and *ravenous* doesn't always refer to food. You might say a word was lost in the *crevices* of your brain—this is a figurative use of the word since words don't really fall into steep, narrow openings in your brain. Be as creative as you like! See the writing tip to learn more about how to use figurative language effectively.

   Students may struggle with figuring out how to use the words figuratively at first, but with some help, they should be able to come up with some creative uses of these words. Examples are included below for inspiration, if necessary.

   anemia (231) ***n*: a deficiency of hemoglobin in the blood, which causes fatigue.**

   Matt felt so disturbed and worried about El Patron's health that, when he sat down at the piano, his playing sounded anemic.

   treachery (241) ***n*: betrayal of trust; deception.**

   When he was hiding in the dusty secret passages, Matt's treacherous asthma threatened to betray him with a sneeze at any moment.

   ravenous (248) ***adj*: extremely hungry.**

   Ravenous for knowledge of Dreamland, the Lost Boys peppered Matt with questions.

I love writing. I love the swirl and swing of words as they tangle with human emotions.

James A. Michener

machete (250) ***n*: a broad, heavy knife used as a tool or weapon.**

Like a vicious machete, the brain implants hacked and slashed connections in Rosa's brain.

crevice (251) ***n*: a long, narrow opening, especially in a rock.**

The Lost Boys would never be able to climb out of the dark crevice of ignorance and compliance with which the Keepers maintained order.

2. Answer all of the following questions in one paragraph summarizing the details of this section of the book. Remember to begin your paragraph with a topic sentence and to support this sentence with details. For instance, your topic sentence might be something like, "As Matt moves into his fourteenth year, his life is more in jeopardy than ever." Answers to the following questions will provide the details to support this claim and give you the direction of your paragraph. (If you can't fit everything into one paragraph, you may write two.)

   A strong paragraph will show clear structure (topic sentence, supporting details, and a conclusion), and include specific references to the story points below. Students may need feedback before making final revisions in order to produce a cohesive, comprehensive summary.

   a. How does Celia use her *curandera* training to help Matt?

      Celia begins to slowly poison Matt with foxglove in order to damage his heart enough to make it unsuitable for a transplant. She is very careful not to overdose him or cause damage that would endanger Matt's life, although he does get very sick as Celia experiments with the right dosage.

   b. What does Mr. Alacran tell Tam Lin to do with Matt after El Patron dies?

      After El Patron dies, Mr. Alacran orders Tam Lin to kill Matt and dispose of him. Tam Lin agrees and ties Matt up and takes him away, but he is really helping Matt escape.

   c. What is the "dirty little secret" Tam Lin shares with Matt at the oasis?

      Tam Lin says that no one can tell the difference between a human and a clone because there is no difference. He says clones are just as good as anyone else. This knowledge is life-changing for Matt.

   d. Does Matt find freedom in Aztlan?

      No, Matt is confined in an orphan's home where he is worked like a slave and mistreated. However, he manages to escape with the help of some friends and goes to find Maria. When he finds Maria, her mother is with her, and Esperanza proves to be a powerful ally by saving Matt from being taken back to the orphan's home.

   e. Why does he return to the Alacran estate?

Esperanza and Maria tell him that no one has heard from the estate since El Patron's death, and Matt finds out that, as El Patron's clone, he is the only one who can get past the security shield. Esperanza also convinces Matt that the law is on his side and that he now owns all of El Patron's estate and interests. Matt returns to the Alacran estate to dismantle the drug empire and free the slaves.

3. Write a scene with the Keepers telling a moralistic story, and have Matt contradict the lesson. The Keepers tell "inspirational" stories meant as moral instruction, which Matt recognizes as thinly veiled attempts to keep the workers subservient. Matt's keen intellect often trips up the small-minded Keepers. Now it is your turn to make up a heavy-handed moral tale (one that is overly obvious about what it is trying to teach) and let Matt reveal the flaws in it.

   This assignment may be challenging as the student is asked to think metaphorically, rather than just literally. The simplistic stories that the Keepers tell usually use physical metaphors (such as ten fingers playing a piano or a five-legged horse) to teach a lesson that reinforces their rules of socialist behavior (for example, all fingers must work together to play a tune, and if a fifth leg tries to go in another direction it keeps the horse from getting to its destination). If students need help coming up with an idea, they might be steered toward using the animal kingdom as the foundation of their parable, or using a skill they know well. When writing the story in a scene, the student can be encouraged to have Matt's character point out the flaw in the simplistic logic of the tale.

4. Make a two-column list of the similarities and differences between "prisons" where Matt was confined. Matt is as much a prisoner at the plankton factory as he was on the Alacran estate. Think of as many ways to compare the two locations as you can. For instance, you can compare the food, chores, treatment, environment, sights, smells, etc. Keep your lists parallel—that is, first compare food, then chores, then treatment, etc., using the same order in each list.

   In list format, students will find ways to compare these two places. They might focus on how Matt had plenty of good things to eat and privileges of wealth in Opium (he was given music lessons and extravagant gifts), but little respect, and he was intended as a transplant donor. In Aztlan, Matt had the respect and friendship of his peers but the life of an indentured servant. He was held captive, and those in charge of both places felt they were treating him well. Check the student's use of consistent parallel construction in both lists.

Writing Tip

Figurative language falls under the category of literary devices, which are techniques writers use to produce a certain effect. Many literary devices use figurative language and symbolism to increase the expressiveness of a phrase. Analogies, hyperbole, personification, and metaphors are a few examples of effective literary techniques. See "Literary Devices" in *Write It Right* for more details, examples, and ideas that you can use in your assignments this week.

SHARE YOUR WORK

Please submit lessons 5 and 6 to your teacher as soon as they are completed. Remember to include your drawing if you choose assignment #3.b. in lesson 5. Place all your work in your Google course doc, label each assignment, and then send an email notification to your teacher.

Lesson

17

The Diary of a Young Girl: The End

Have you noticed a friend changing and growing into a more mature person, being better able to handle setbacks, for instance, or being more tolerant and understanding of another's point of view? Have you noticed a change like this in yourself lately? As the health of the group declines and the danger of exposure increases, the strength of the human spirit asserts itself and hopes of liberation climb. Anne begins to display a more sophisticated maturity of thought, self-reflection, and philosophy.

Learning Objectives

- Write in a first-person perspective.
- Define and differentiate between similar historically relevant terms.
- Create a multimedia presentation.

Digging Deeper

During the Holocaust, many children ended up in Nazi concentration camps like Terezin, located outside of Prague, where a woman named Friedl Dicker Brandeis secretly encouraged the children to draw and paint as a form of therapy. Many of their drawings, such as the ones found online at "The Kids Who Lived and Drew the Holocaust" (*Kurioso*), were later used during the Nuremberg Trials.

Drawing by 16-year-old Ella Liebermann, from "The Kids Who Lived and Drew the Holocaust" (Image credit: Kurioso)

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Read from 27 March 1944 to the end of *The Diary of a Young Girl* and the Afterword.
- ☐ Answer comprehension questions with quotations from text.
- ☐ Write journal entries from the point of view of a "helper."
- ☐ Define and explain Nazi terms.
- ☐ Discuss discrimination against other groups.
- ☐ Create a multimedia presentation.
- ☐ Complete journal assignments.

Along the Way

The archetypal abyss grows as Anne and her family get more news of people they know who have been caught and sent away. When their vegetable supplier is caught for having Jews in his house, the family is worried and frightened for him, and for themselves. Their food rations are cut once again. Finding out the police forced the door to find the Jews hidden in the house of the vegetable man makes Anne more nervous than ever. This low point comes one week before D-Day, the day the Allied invasion was launched that turned the tide of the war.

Assignments

Nuremberg Trials *n*: the series of military trials held by the Allied Forces of World War II to prosecute Nazi war criminals.

Reading

Read diary entries from 27 March 1944 to the end of *The Diary of a Young Girl* (187–268) and the Afterword (365–368). You may also like to read "The Inhabitants of the Secret Annex and Their Real Names" and "The Helpers" (373–380).

Reader's Journal

Add any final characters to your character chart, and explain their connection. Write a new journal entry.

Students will add any final characters to their character chart and write a new journal entry.

Writing

1. Answer the following questions in complete sentences, quoting directly from the text as necessary to support your answers.

   a. What are Anne's hobbies?

   Anne lists her favorite hobbies, in order, as writing, genealogy, history, mythology, film stars, and family photos.

   b. What are some of the "food cycles" the group goes through?

   Food cycles are periods when they eat nothing but one type of vegetable because this is what came with their supplies. The food cycles include endive, spinach, kohlrabi, salsify, cucumbers, tomatoes, and sauerkraut.

   c. What does Anne most want to be when she grows up?

   Anne wants to become a journalist.

d. Why is 15 April 1944 an important date to Anne?

This is when Anne gets her first kiss (it is from Peter).

2. Write several journal entries from the point of view of any one of Anne's helpers. By the end of the book, it becomes clear how dangerous it is for the helpers on the outside and how much the secrecy and constant peril are affecting them. What would you do if you were in a position to hide, protect, and care for Anne's family? How would you feel? Choose one of the helpers, and write several first-person journal entries describing his or her experience. (See the writing tip for information on point of view.)

Writing in first person, journal-style, allows the student quite a bit of leeway in how feelings are expressed. The goal is for the student to connect with the experience of living during Nazi occupation from the perspective of one whose life is endangered because of helping others. The helpers—Bep and her father, Miep and Jan, Mr. Kleiman, and Mr Kugler—all put their own lives in jeopardy by helping the Jews in hiding. Student responses will vary greatly, but a strong response will display an awareness of how the choice to help others requires sacrifice on the part of the helper, and of how the helper's conscience could not allow any other path.

3. Define and explain the differences between the following terms:

   - labor camp, concentration camp, extermination camp

     There were several types of labor camps operated by the Nazis during WWII. Most held Jewish civilians forced to provide labor for the German war effort. Concentration camps were facilities where people were confined, usually forced into manual labor under such cruel conditions that many died. Extermination camps were created for the sole purpose of mass murdering those the German regime deemed undesirable.

   - storm troopers, SS, Gestapo

     The Nazi party formed its own militia to prevent opponents from disrupting meetings, and they earned the name Sturmabteilung (abbreviated to SA) or Storm troopers. As Hitler rose in power, the Schutz Staffel, or SS, took over the duties of the SA. The SS was Hitler's elite private army, serving as bodyguards and overseers of the concentration and extermination camps. The Gestapo was the state secret police (Geheime Staatspolizei).

4. In the sentence below, replace "Christian" and "Jew" with other groups (based on age, race, gender, ethnicity, etc.), and explain why your sentence is true. Give examples from the news or your own personal experience to illustrate your new statement.

   > What one Christian does is his own responsibility, what one Jew does is thrown back at all Jews. (Frank 326)

   Anne's comment above relates to so many others who have been persecuted or discriminated against, both in the past and today. For instance, you might change the sentence to read, "What one American does is his own responsibility, what one Mexican does is thrown back at all

Mexicans," or "What one adult does is his own responsibility, what one teenager does is thrown back at all teenagers." Substitute words that describe a situation you've heard about or experienced personally, and then explain what you mean, giving specific examples.

The student is asked to choose a group that is often discriminated against and explore how discrimination has affected those in the group. A student might choose another ethnic or religious group, women, gays and lesbians, transgender people, or those with particular disabilities. A student can also choose a group based on age or gender, such as teenage boys. The goal is for students to demonstrate how that particular group is discriminated against, and by whom, using specific examples to support their claims. An astute response might also draw parallels between the experiences of the chosen group and those of others who have been discriminated against.

5. Choose one of the following three topics, and present your ideas and opinions creatively in a multimedia presentation.

   a. Anne's strategy for dealing with the stress of the household is "laugh at everything and forget everybody else" (345). Would this be an effective strategy for you? Why or why not?

   b. Do you agree or disagree with Anne's belief that Peter must develop strength of character instead of looking for ways to make easy money because "while it may seem easy and wonderful, it will drag him down" (349)? Create a presentation that explains what she means as well as your thoughts on the matter.

   c. What do you think keeps a person on the right path? In one of Anne's final journal entries, she states that it is not the fear of God but the "upholding your own sense of honor and obeying your own conscience" (350) that keeps a person honest and true in life. What do you think?

   Here are some presentation ideas (feel free to come up with ideas of your own):

   - a graphic novel–style drawing
   - write and act out a scene
   - create a collage
   - design a digital presentation (using a tool such as PowerPoint or Prezi)
   - conduct a mock interview
   - produce a video clip

   Remember to use at least two different ways to convey information, such as audio and graphics, acting and speaking, or text and graphics.

   Students will be creating an engaging multimedia presentation focused on one of the three writing prompts above. As a creative project, the student is given a great deal of freedom to design a meaningful presentation. Each of the prompts requires an individual interpretation from the student, and this will be reflected in the final product. Presentations should include at least two different elements (e.g., graphics, audio,

text, etc.). Students may benefit from discussing ideas beforehand and getting help in determining the most effective way to express their ideas based on resources available.

Writing Tip

When writing from a singular viewpoint, you can only reveal what the viewpoint character sees, hears, thinks, and feels. Read "Perspective in Fiction" (*Write It Right*) for more tips on writing in first person, second person, and third person (limited or omniscient).

SHARE YOUR WORK

If you are unsure of the best way to share your multimedia presentation, contact your teacher for instructions.

Lesson

23

Into the Wild: Leaving a Mark

If someone asked you what your personal code was, could you put it into words? A personal code of honor is a philosophy or set of values that guide your actions. Chris McCandless lived according to his own personal code, and he left his mark on the world, in both written form and in the lives he touched. Looking back on his life, some readers might second-guess his decisions, feeling that they wouldn't have made such careless mistakes, while others might see some of themselves in Chris's determination and zeal for living according to his own personal code. As you complete this final lesson for *Into the Wild* and prepare your final project for this book, think about your own personal code, where your life's quest might take you, and how you might leave your mark upon the world.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Write one paragraph on the impact of primary source material.
- ☐ Spend a day and/or night alone in a place that is wild to you.
- ☐ Write a reflective essay on choices in life.

Learning Objectives

- Consider the impact of primary source material.
- Record observations of an experience in nature.
- Write a reflective essay.

Digging Deeper

In the archetypal hero's journey, the threshold is the point at which the hero steps into the adventure and there is no turning back. In real life, of course, this may not be so clear, or there may be more than one threshold. In Chris's case, the

Denali National Park and Preserve (Image credit: National Park Service)

image of him waving to Gallien and walking into the wild imprints a strong picture of the hero stepping across the threshold and not looking back.

In *House of Light*, Mary Oliver acknowledges the feelings at the threshold of an adventure:

> Because it is good
>
> to be afraid—
>
> but not too afraid— ("Looking For Snakes" 48)

As you write your final essay for this unit, keep in mind the importance of the inner drive for adventure, for questing, and for finding the fullness of life. It can be argued that this feeling, which probably drove Chris McCandless into the wild, lives in every human being, waiting to be discovered and set free.

Assignments

Writing

1. Describe the impact of primary source material. Reflect on how it feels to read the words of McCandless in his letters, graffiti, and journal. How is this firsthand, primary source material different from reading Krakauer's account? Explain your thoughts in one paragraph.

   Students are free to express their own personal feelings in this assignment. They may describe strong emotional feelings arising from reading the words from Chris's own hand. Students are encouraged to reflect on how primary and secondary source materials differ, and the impact of each.

2. Spend several hours or a day (and, if possible, a night) alone in a place that is wild to you. This could be in the woods near your home, in a state or national park, or at a local campground. Find a place where you can be alone (if parents or other adults accompany you, try to interact as little as possible). Bring your reader's journal with you so that you can write down ideas or reflections, or draw pictures. When you return home, reflect on your experience. Describe the kinds of things you saw, heard, and smelled. What did you think about? What went through your mind? Why do you think these thoughts were the ones that came to you? Did you notice any changes in yourself or realize anything that surprised you? Write at least one page.

   This activity is intended to help students gain some insight into how the sense of aloneness in nature affects a human being. Obviously, students and parents will need to exercise good judgment to ensure this assignment is done safely, but every effort should be made to allow students time to themselves outdoors. Their reflections should detail the physical, mental, and emotional aspects of the experience. A strong response will include reference to the experiences of Chris McCandless.

3. Write a reflective essay on choices in life. You've been keeping track of the choices Chris made and how they affected his journey and, ultimately, his life. Think about the choices you've made in life and how they have altered your path. Look at your map, find all the red and yellow flags, and think about what you might have done differently if you were in Chris's place. Faced with

the warning signs that seem clear to you now, what choices would you have made? Why? Write a two- or three-page reflective essay describing your thoughts and feelings looking back on Chris's life choices. Discuss the impact specific choices have made in your own life. See the writing tip for help crafting your essay.

This essay will combine the student's journal map and notes with thoughts on personal life choices. Students are asked to reflect on their own decisions as well as Chris's. The essay should draw a direct connection between choices and consequences, negative or positive. A strong response will include specific details about the student's life experiences as well as specific text references.

> *It begins with a character, usually, and once he stands up on his feet and begins to move, all I do is trot along behind him with a paper and pencil trying to keep up long enough to put down what he says and does.*
>
> **William Faulkner**

Writing Tip

When writing your reflective essay (assignment #3), the goal is your thoughtful exploration and the clear expression of your ideas. This includes the following important points:

- Deliberate organization of your thoughts. You may want to brainstorm by jotting down a list of first thoughts or free-writing to figure out how you want to present your idea.
- Form/structure. Pay attention to each sentence. Do your sentences make sense on their own and in relation to one another? Is there a logical flow to your ideas? How do your paragraphs fit together?
- Clarity. Have you succeeded in clearly conveying your thoughts to the reader? Have you done this in a powerful and convincing way?
- Honesty. Does this essay demonstrate your original thoughts in your unique voice? Do you write in a style that is clearly your own? Reading your work aloud (or having someone read it to you) will help you hear how the reader will experience your piece and will help you fix any unclear ideas and clunky language.
- Economy/housekeeping. Have you eliminated all unnecessary words and phrases? Remember, this is your paper—phrases like "I think" are unnecessary; eliminate them to make your statements stronger. Have you proofread your paper and rid it of punctuation and spelling errors?

SHARE YOUR WORK

If you have any questions about the assignments for this lesson, feel free to contact your teacher before you begin or at any point in the process. You will be copying your journal assignments for this unit and sending them at the end of the next lesson.

Appendix