

In Search of a Hero

I-Search Project

“Heroism is a matter of integrity—becoming more and more, at each step ourselves.”
–Joseph Campbell

“The real reason for a quest is always self-knowledge.”
–Thomas C. Foster

“A hero is someone who understands the responsibility that comes with his freedom.”
–Bob Dylan

An I-Search Project is a personal research paper about a topic that is important to the writer. While it is a research-based project, it is more personal and less formal than a traditional research paper, since the writer is required to incorporate his or her own preconceptions, beliefs, and personal ideas into it. A well-developed I-Search Project also tells the story of the writer’s personal search for information, as well as what the writer learned about the topic that he or she researched.

Since our essential question for the first semester is “What makes a hero?” this specific I-Search Project will be on a person of your choosing whom you admire and who you think has heroic qualities.

Research

During the course of this project, you will spend time, both in and outside class, researching your subject. You need to find out about your chosen person’s background, his/her experiences, and his/her achievements.

Ultimately, your goal will be to measure your subject’s journey against the hero’s journey archetype that we have discussed in class, so it will be important for you to pay special attention to your subject’s growth over time.

As we move through the project, we will give you more specific guidelines on how to conduct your research. During this process, you will be expected to demonstrate your progress, so it’s very important that you keep up with your research.

Evaluation and Planning

Once the research phase is completed, you will sort through your findings. Consider what you have learned about your subject as well as what you know about heroes. Use the chart below (or your own version of it) to explore your subject’s experiences.

Birth and Details of Childhood
What is evident about your subject as a child? Does anything specifically demonstrate his/her future heroic potential (pre-ordination of greatness)
Call to Adventure/Journey/Quest/Challenge:
Did your subject receive a call to adventure in any way? What inspired the path that he/she followed or the goals that he/she set?

Crossing of the First Threshold:

Is there a point at which your subject moved forward, crossing into the adventure that led him/her toward his/her goal?

Belly of the Whale:

Is there a point at which your subject experienced a symbolic death – meaning a moment where he/she let go of his/her former self and moved into a new role or identity?

The Road of Trials:

What obstacles, if any, did your subject face in pursuing his or her goal(s)? Did your subject receive help from others? Was he /she mentally, physically, emotionally, psychologically challenged? How?

Ultimate Boon: Is there a noticeable goal that your subject achieved along his/her journey?

Master of Two Worlds: Is there evidence that your subject has made a “return” from the adventure? Did your subject come through the “adventure” a wiser person? Has he/she shared knowledge/ wisdom with others? How?

Parts of Written I-Search Paper

Part 1: What I Knew – Initial Conception/Definition of a Hero

This is essentially the introduction to your I-Search project. In it, you will spend time defining heroism, taking into consideration your own pre-conceived notions and the ideas we have discussed in class.

- Discuss how you used to define heroism. Think about the people whom you admired and about the fictional characters you found compelling when you were younger – your childhood view of heroism.
- Describe what you understand about heroes now, based on our discussions in class and your own ideas. Consider Joseph Campbell’s model as well as the literature we have covered together.

Part 2: What I Discovered – Sharing of Information

This is the section of the paper where you will present the information you found during your research – from written and electronic sources. You will need to answer the following questions:

- What information did you learn about your subject?
(This should include appropriate biographical information about your subject – possible about his/her childhood, family situation, education, etc. Length will vary, but this part should be at least three paragraphs including quotations.)
- Does your subject’s ‘journey’ fit into the hero’s journey pattern?
(This should connect your subject’s experiences with the archetypal model we have examined in class. Length will vary but you should have at least one paragraph for each of the following: the Departure – including the Call; the Initiation; and the Return. Your discussion should evaluate how your subject fits or does not fit into the pattern we have discussed in class.)

Part 3: What I Know Now – Evaluation of Findings

In this section of the essay, you will assess whether or not your subject is a hero and provide a rationale for your assessment. Consider whether you have been able to identify links between your subject's life, experiences, and achievements and the Hero's Journey pattern. Just because someone inspires others, does this make him or her heroic?

It doesn't matter whether your subject turns out to be heroic or not. What matters is that you have considered the criteria for heroism that we have established together and applied it thoughtfully to your research.

Part 4: What I Learned – Final Thoughts on the Process

In this section, you will reflect on the process of completing this project. Consider the following questions (*one paragraph*).

- What did you learn about selecting a quality research topic?
- What did you learn about the process of research a topic over an extended period of time?
- What did you learn about yourself and your strengths and weaknesses as a researcher during this process?
- What advice would you give to another student embarking on this process?

Publishing the Project

All sections need to be typed and linked together in a coherent discussion. You will also need the following:

- Text Citations – Give credit for information that you use in your essay – this includes direct quotations and reworded ideas. You must provide textual citations using the MLA format.
- Works Cited Page – List the sources you used in your project. You must use at least four reliable sources. Follow MLA guidelines to create this document.
- Cover Page – your cover page should include the following:
 - A creative title – Give your essay an interesting title. Readers will read this first, but you should create it last to ensure that it accurately represents what is in your work.
 - Your full name
 - Your teacher's name
 - The date
 - Your word count
- Page Numbers.